Football FA Cup semi-final: Sheff Utd 0 Newcastle 1

Shearer's touch of class is decisive

Michael Walker at Old Trafford

AT TIMES it was tense, at times it was unconvincing, there were even times when it looked as though it might not happen at all, but ultimately, as they say, class will prove decisive and a touch of it from Alan Shearer last Sunday delivered Newcastle United their first FA Cup final appearance since 1974.

The ghosts of the 3-0 mauling by Liverpool on that day may at last be laid to rest; similarly the ghouls of this season — Stevenage, Dublin, Marbella — that have turned Newcastle from the nation's favourite club to the butt of many a joke. But assuming Arsenal qualify for the Champions League, Newcastle are now in Europe, via a place in the Cup Winners' Cup.

On paper, even in terms of kits, Arsenal v Newcastle offers a classic final. But if Newcastle are to win it they will surely have to find someone apart from Shearer who can put the ball in the net when the opportunity arises. Andreas Andersson has not done that since his arrival from Milan two months and seven games ago, and the Swede failed conspicuously to do so again.

Had he taken either of two glittering chances in the opening half-hour Newcastle's passage to Wembley would have been considerably smoother. Overall Newcastle were the better team, but the slimness of their lead and Sheffield United's refusal to panic meant that the Northeast required an athletic fingertip save by Shay Given from Wayne Quinn's stooping header two minutes from time, and Nicos Dabizas's brave double block of Graham Stuart's shot to save their blushes.

Dabizas's intervention capped an impressive display by the recently signed Greek international but it was an indication of the Blades' threat that he was seen so frequently.

From the beginning there was a palpable sense of overbearing anxiety emitting from the 27,000 Geordies blanketing half of Old Trafford in black and white. The Sheffield multitude was full of vivid, colourful exuberance — and outsang the Geordies throughout.

At the start of each half they had good reason. Bobby Ford, Sheffield's delicate midfield engineer, produced the game's first slippery shot in the fifth minute, and in the 50th Given made a stop from Quinn equal in quality to his save at the death. In the mêlée that followed, only a typically robust sliding tackle by Stuart Pearce foiled another Stuart attempt.

So the underdogs had their moments, yet it would be incorrect to say that Steve Thompson's side deserved to win.

Newcastle only truly settled after Andersson's 20th-minute run on goal. David Batty manoeuvred it with a clever, fast pass that changed the angle of attack. Shearer flicked it on to Andersson but, just as it seemed he would shoot, the Swede fell over as Alan Kelly met him on the penalty spot, although a lucky deflection off Andersson still needed scooping off the line by Sandford.

Nilsen made the next goal-line clearance, soon afterwards, and Holdsworth provided a third before the interval. In between, a powerful header from Gary Speed clipped the woodwork and once Newcastle regained control 10 minutes into the second half the efforts continued to come.

On the hour, so did Shearer. Speed did well on the left, slipping a neat ball between two defenders to Pearce; his curling centre was met by Shearer's forehead. Kelly parried but Shearer's sharpness brought him to the rebound ahead of all challengers.

It was his fifth FA Cup goal this season and, more importantly, his third winner. And never mind Wembley, it represented Newcastle's first victory at Old Trafford for 26 years.

● Rangers will meet Hearts in the final of the Scottish Cup. They beat Celtic, their fiercest rivals, 2-1 at Celtic Park in the semi-final. In the other game Hearts triumphed over Falkirk 3-1, the Edinburgh side securing victory with two late goals.



High five . . . Shearer celebrates his fifth goal in the FA Cup this season, pursued by David Batty PHOTOGRAPH: PETER POWELL

Wolves 0 Arsenal 1

Wreh lights the road to Wembley

David Lacey at Villa Park

ARSENAL continue to hunt the Double with an awesome singleness of purpose. At Villa Park last Sunday their fifth 1-0 victory in six games took them to their 13th FA Cup final. One early mistake and Wolverhampton Wanderers were done for.

Arsène Wenger now has a chance to become the third foreign manager in a year to lead a team to success in a Wembley final. Last season Ruud Gullit's Chelsea won the FA Cup, and recently the Coca-Cola Cup went to Stamford Bridge under the auspices of Gianluca Vialli.

Wenger's Arsenal have yet to play with the panache of Chelsea at their best, but their style is less likely to fall prey to violent swings of mood and form. Here they were without the suspended Dennis Bergkamp and the injured Ian Wright, but they still controlled large areas of the game once Christopher Wreh had given them the lead in the 12th minute.

In the quarter-finals Wolves had pulled off the surprise of a hitherto predictable FA Cup by winning 1-0 at Leeds. Against Arsenal they employed similar methods but came no closer to repeating their triumph of Elland Road than a flurry of activity early in the second half.

Wolves never did have much luck huffing and puffing at houses of bricks and Arsenal have seldom been built of anything else. Patrick Vieira was their cornerstone. He has all the hustle and bustle of Arsenal midfielders from way back; the difference is that, compared with many of them, he has the sureness of touch to keep possession and the vision to make his passes tell.

Mark McGhee's industrious Nationwide League team never really came to grips with Vieira's domination of the game between the penalty areas. Having lost Simon Osborn, who had done so much to win them command of the midfield at Leeds, through suspension, Wolves hoped that the experience of Steve Sedgley would restrict Vieira's ability to bring the ball out of defence and set up attacks. This proved a mite optimistic.

Wolves' best chances were confined to the opening 20 minutes of the second half. A shot from Paul Simpson was parried by David Seaman but dropped at too awkward an angle for Steve Claridge to score from the ricochet, and later another rebound ran away from Claridge with the Arsenal goalkeeper out of position.

Afterwards Wenger admitted that he became a little nervous at Arsenal's failure to turn their possession into more goals. But their strength in defence and midfield is carrying them towards a mighty season's climax, and Bergkamp will soon be back.

Cryptic crossword by Gordius

Across

1 Don's upset to a degree, so get out of the way (7)
5 Turn over top card first for prize (7)
9 A slug can spoil good parts (9)
10 Speak in calm but terse fashion (5)
11 Bar banter (4)
12 Clergy hoped riots could be settled (10)
14 Water pistol first seen at the tea table (6)
15 Aboard a ship is the owner (7)
16 Power to choose in calamitous situation whence improvement may be in sight (7)
18 Bath chap? (6)
20 Wild storm break associated with gothic novel (4,6)
21 Talking bird (4)
24 Man with identity, in a manner of speaking (5)
25 Philosopher bashing the church in size 10 (9)
26 African party in fair business condition (7)
27 Woman named? (7)

Down

1 Provocation may cause some strange reaction (5)
2 Form of verse composed in Staines (7)
3 Ben is good at divinity (4)
4 Funeral parlour? (9,6)
5 Take the law into one's own hands? (5,3,7)
6 Number one in support of music? (5,5)
7 Cannabis particles used for medication (7)
8 Sometimes their object is rated unfairly (7)
13 Mink hasten to disperse from around the M26 (7,3)
16 Gather report on return of cheese (French) (7)
17 Enthusiastic reception to nil tax charge (7)
19 Lie with 21 — it could be quite proper (7)
22. One gets out of the way of the tough (5)
23 Scribe who wrote about the last time (4)

Last week's solution

D	E	P	R	E	S	S	E	D		S	T	A	M	P
E		E		Q		T		E		E		B		I
C	O	R	F	U		I	N	T	H	E	M	A	I	N
O		S		I		L		R		P		S		K
R	E	P	E	T	I	T	I	O	N		S	H	O	E
		I		A		O		I		P				R
P	U	R	I	T	A	N		T	A	L	L	E	S	T
R		E		I						A		L		O
I	N	D	O	O	R	S		S	T	Y	G	I	A	N
N				N		O		E		F		M		
C	A	G	E		S	M	O	T	H	E	R	I	N	G
E		R		E		E		T		L		N		R
T	O	A	D	S	T	O	O	L		L	E	A	V	E
O		S		P		N		E		O		T		E
N	A	P	P	Y		E	N	D	O	W	M	E	N	T

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Aston Villa 2, West Ham Utd 0; Blackburn 1, Man Utd 3; Derby C 0, Chelsea 1; Leeds Utd 2, Barnsley 1; Leicester City 1, Coventry City 1; Sheff Wed 1, Southampton 0; Tottenham 1, Everton 1; Wimbledon 0, Bolton 0. **Leading Positions:** 1, Man Utd (played 33, points 66); 2, Arsenal (30-60); 3, Liverpool (31-54).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Bury 2, Huddersfld 2; Man City 4, Stockport 1; Norwich 2, Bradford 3; Portsmth 1, Birminghm 1; Port Vale 3, Oxford 0; Reading 2, Stoke 0; Swindon 0, Charlton 1; W B A 2, Middlesbro 1 **Leading Positions:** 1, Nottm Forest (41-83); 2, Sunderland (40-79); 3, Middlesbro (39-75).

Division Two: Blackpool 1, Walsall 0; Bournemth 0, Wycombe 0; Bristol City 1, Carlisle 0; Fulham 2, Preston 1; Grimsby 0, Gillingham 0; Luton 3, York 0; Millwall 1, Bristol R 1; Northmptn 0, Burnley 1; Oldham 2, Plymouth 0; Wigan 3, Watford 2; Wrexham 2, Brentford 2. **Leading Positions:** 1, Bristol City (41-81); 2, Watford (41-77); 3, Grimsby (40-67).

Division Three: Brighton 2, Sc'thorpe 1; Darlington 2, Barnet 3; Doncaster 1, Hull 0; Exeter 5, Chester 0; Hartlepool 3, Cambridge 3; Leyton O 2, Mansfield 2; Macclesfld 1, Lincoln 0; Swansea 0, Shrewsbry 1; Torquay 0, Rochdale 0. **Leading Positions:** 1, Notts County (41-88); 2, Torquay (41-70); 3, Macclesfield (41-70).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Aberdeen 0, St Johnstn 1, Dundee U P, Dunfermline P. **Leading Positions:** 1, Celtic (30-63); 2, Rangers (31-63); 3, Hearts (30-61).

First Division: Airdrie 1, Dundee 2; Raith 1, Morton 2; Stirling A 2, Ayr 0; St Mirren 2, Hamilton 2. **Leading Positions:** 1, Dundee (31-68); 2, Raith (31-63); 3, Falkirk (31-53).

Second Division: Brechin P, Stenhsmr P; Livingston P, Clyde P; Stranraer 2, Clydebank 1; Invrnss CT 0, Forfar 0. **Leading Positions:** 1, Clydebank (31-53); 2, Livingston (30-49); 3, Stranraer (31-49).

Third Division: Albion 0, Arbroath 1; Alloa 1, Ross Co 1; Cowdnbth P, Berwick P; Dumbarton 1, E Stirling 0; Montrose 4, Queens Pk 3. **Leading Positions:** 1, Alloa (31-61); 2, Arbroath (30-57); 3, Ross County (31-52).

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Fears of violence and dissent follow euphoria at Ulster agreement

Mitchell warns of terrorist threat to Irish peace deal

John Mullin and Ewen MacAskill

GEORGE MITCHELL, who brokered last week's momentous deal among Northern Ireland's political parties, warned last Sunday that extremists will engage in a campaign of violence in an attempt to scupper the agreement.

Mr Mitchell, a former United States senator, raised the spectre of the Irish National Liberation Army and the Loyalist Volunteer Force, which are both opposed to the current ceasefire, embarking on a killing spree to destroy the settlement announced on Good Friday.

He fears that the aim of the hard-line groups is to suck the mainstream paramilitary organisations back into terrorism ahead of the referendum on the deal, which is due to take place in Ulster and in the Irish Republic on May 22.

"There are people on both sides who want to disrupt the process, who are committed to the way of violence, and will step up their activities now, at the time of the referendum, and thereafter," he said. "My hope is that it won't destabilise the process."

Tony Blair echoed his comments, warning of difficult weeks ahead. The British prime minister, who with his Irish counterpart, Bertie Ahern, spent three days and nights brokering the deal in Belfast, said: "What we have done so far has primed people, and if people exercise vision and imagination then it can be done. There is no doubt about that because the principles of this are right."

As the euphoria that greeted Good Friday's announcement began to fade, the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, and the leader of the Ulster Unionists, David Trimble, were facing a critical week. Both must battle to sell the agreement to their grassroots supporters.

Mr Trimble is trying to contain a growing revolt among his parliamentary colleagues. Six of his fellow nine Ulster Unionist MPs are opposed to the deal. The real threat to Mr Trimble comes from Jeffrey Donaldson, the 35-year-old MP for Lagan Valley. Mr Donaldson, seen as a future leader, stormed out as Mr Trimble led his delegation into the conference room to deliver his agreement, and voted against it at an Ulster Unionist meeting last Saturday. But after a tetchy four-hour meeting of the executive Mr Trimble carried the day by 55 to 23.

The real crunch comes this Saturday, when his 800-strong ruling council delivers its verdict. Defeat for Mr Trimble would scupper the deal. It would also finish him as leader, a fate that befell his predecessor Brian Faulkner when he signed the ill-fated Sunningdale agreement in 1973.

Unionists are uneasy over proposals for cross-border institutions, an accelerated programme to release convicted terrorists, and fears that Sinn Fein members could be part of a new assembly without any IRA guns being handed over.

Meanwhile the IRA delivered a wait-and-see response to an agreement that falls short of Sinn Fein's minimum requirements. It said: "We will judge it against its potential to deliver a just and durable peace to our country."

Mr Adams, addressing a rally at Carrickmore, Co Tyrone, to commemorate the 1916 Easter Rising, indicated that he believed the armed phase of the republican struggle was over. "When I pay tribute to the IRA soldiers, I pay tribute not just to their role when they make war, but also to their role when they provide the opportunity for making peace."

The Sinn Fein leadership faces two critical tests of its strategy in the wake of the Stormont deal. After an executive meeting, the annual conference takes place in Dublin this weekend with republican splinter groups predicting mass defections.

Even so, it was a very special Good Friday. Mr Blair, sustained on a diet of no sleep, tea and snacks, announced an historic deal while the hailstones fell. Wan but delighted, he said he hoped 30 years of violence were at last over.

This was his finest day as prime minister. No one had dared believe it possible that Ulster Unionists and Sinn Fein, along with six parties between them, would agree a deal after 22 months of negotiations.

The settlement provides for an assembly in Northern Ireland, raising the possibility of Mr Trimble and Mr Adams sitting alongside each other in a power-sharing executive. There will be cross-border authorities and a Council of Ministers. Relationships involving Belfast, Dublin, London and the Scottish and Welsh assemblies are to be recast.

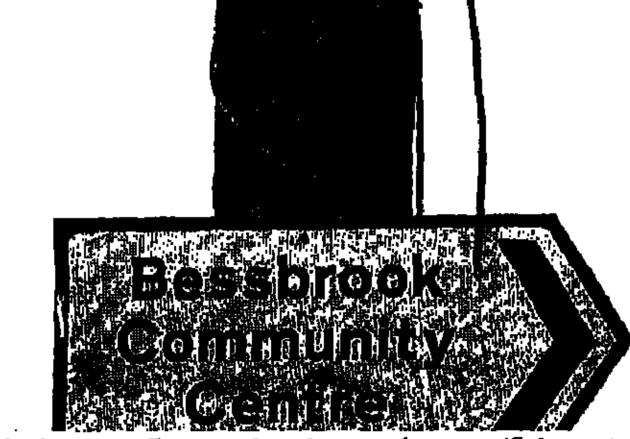
The jail doors are to open for paramilitary prisoners. Sentence remission will be increased from 50 per cent to two-thirds, meaning half of Northern Ireland's 530 convicted terrorists will soon be released — most within the next two years.

Agreement was sealed only with the intervention of President Bill Clinton, who spoke to participants through Thursday night last week. He said: "The task facing people in Northern Ireland will be to make the peace endure. It will be difficult. But they have chosen hope over hate, and the promise of the future over the poison of the past."

The Irish prime minister, Mr Ahern, still wearing a black tie after the funeral of his mother, admitted that it had been a difficult week, but said: "I am sure my mother would have been pleased that we made so much progress."

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15





An IRA sign near Crossmaglen that used to say 'Sniper at work' reflects the new mood of hope in Ireland PHOTO: PAUL McERLANE

The outline for peace in Northern Ireland

The agreement creates three interconnecting bodies of government within Northern Ireland, between the North and South of Ireland, and between the Irish Republic and United Kingdom as a whole.

Strand 1

Internal arrangements of Northern Ireland

● **Assembly**
(To be elected in June and run by the Executive Committee)
- It will be made up of 108 members, 6 from each constituency elected by proportional representation.
- It will have legislative powers. Its first duty will be to set up the North/South Ministerial Council.
- The assembly will be suspended if it does not set up the council within a year.
- Decisions will be made by a weighted majority system to ensure unionists cannot dominate nationalists.

● **Executive Committee**
12 ministers, a first minister, deputy minister and ... departments including:
- Health
- Education
- Environment

Strand 2

North/South Ministerial Council

A forum for ministers from Dublin and Belfast to promote joint policies.

Can implement all-Ireland policies – but only with the approval of the Belfast Assembly and Dublin Parliament.

Potential areas of responsibility:
- Agriculture
- Transport
- Policing
- Relations with EU

Strand 3

Council of the Isles

Changes
- Irish Republic will hold referendum on amending articles two and three of its constitution, which lay claim to the territory of Northern Ireland.

Outstanding issues

Timetable for release of paramilitary prisoners

Decommissioning of paramilitary weapons

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 6
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 8.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

West should look to itself in light of Asian crises

THE collapse of the Japanese economy will not only threaten any Asian recovery, but will leave Britain more vulnerable to Japanese pull-outs should significant overseas funds be repatriated to cope with its own debt-laden crisis (Editorial, April 12).

The penny is beginning to drop that dependence on foreign capital leads to financial vulnerability, threatens domestic jobs and stokes up global deflation. It is time the gentleman who supposedly directs Britain's economy, Gordon Brown, realised that to weather the storm of inadequate demand and rising unemployment, control over your own economy is a key defence.
Colin Hines,
Twickenham, Middlesex

CRISES are inevitable in "gangster economies" such as Japan and Russia, where the value of the population's work in creating wealth in the real economy is siphoned off via the money economy. Japanese finance houses have extended billions in unsecured loans to dubious characters.

Britain has had its share of such scams — from Nick Leeson to the Cayman and Channel Island tax havens — where money lost by a bank or brokerage magically pops up in a chain of shops in Tokyo or a beach bar in Bermuda, neatly laundered via a metals futures dealer in South Africa.

Collapse is threatened when it dawns on the majority of honest, hard-working citizens that, despite good work, productivity and commitment, their security diminishes while predatory parasites get richer and richer. They realise their working lives have been stolen; motivation to participate in the hopeless game is reduced, and the economy winds down.

If the banking community willed it, well-programmed, powerful computers could ensure that the money economy always accurately reflects the real economy and that sticky fingers are removed from the global cash-register. It is not too late for Japan to publicly track down such funds and restore national confidence in the value of thrift and work.
Noel Hodson,
Oxford

THE Nobel prize-winner Jose Ramos-Horta has called for Western pressure on President Suharto, but in asking the West to demand that Indonesia undergo political reforms, he is being either naïve or overly optimistic. No Western economic rescue package for Indonesia is likely to include demands for a guarantee of independent trade unions, freedom from censorship or the liberation of political prisoners. The West wants a stable Indonesia — how else can it afford to buy its weapons? — not a democratic one.
(Dr) Jeff Haynes,
London

GEOFFREY ZYGIER claims that Western foreign policy decisions are made according to which other nations are more reliable and honourable — more "like us" (April 5). What nonsense. Foreign policy decisions are made in the light of self-interest. Western nations ask themselves, "Which of these dictators/blackguards/maniacs will do us the least harm?", or "What will we gain most by supporting?".

A shocking example is the support of successive Australian governments for Indonesian annexation of East Timor. This behaviour is, in effect, an appeasement of Indonesia because Australian governments are scared of their military might. Indeed, we even help to train them. There is also the not insignificant matter of oil reserves in the region.

Self-interest triumphs over reliability and honour. We forget this at our peril.
Bob Holderness-Roddam,
Austins Ferry, Tasmania, Australia

Disquiet on the Preston front

NOTHING is so deeply offensive to the people of another country as comments such as Peter Preston's: "The United States is not a society like ours, peopled by men and women like us. It is a deeply foreign land, and — in that sense — deeply alien" (Little Rock seems closer than Calais, April 5).

In Australia "racism" includes the belief that people of another country are different, usually worse, on the basis of their nationality. In that sense Preston's article is deeply racist. In fact the US is too subtle for him. In most of what he writes, he artlessly condemns Britain — not the US.

America has many cultures. If Britain chooses to embrace the fake one from Hollywood or a violent one found among the plebeian inhabitants of rural Arkansas, that reflects on the British media, not Americans. And another thing: George Mitchell is a distinguished American who could have served on the Supreme Court. Your correspondent, it seems, is ageist as well as xenophobic.
Robert Briggs,
Lyons, ACT, Australia

THANK you Peter Preston for your article. Its contents need constant re-iteration if we are not to become a quaint little island off the "Greater American Empire".
Eddie Naisby,
Ruthin, Wales

Zimbabwe still in thrall to whites

IT IS shameful the way whites have blatantly changed the rules whenever the tide of history has moved against them. Are Zimbabweans now being persuaded that it is morally defensible for 0.04 per cent of the population to sit cosily on more than 50 per cent of all fertile land while 80 per cent of its citizens are holed up in the sandy and rocky areas assigned to them by colonial settlers? Is this the heritage bestowed on whites by the so-called Right of Conquest? If it is, then surely those who successfully reconquered should enjoy the same privilege.

But Zimbabwe continues to compromise its dignity for the sake of foreign aid and foreign investment. Until self-respect is salvaged, it does not matter how much aid is received: a sense of insecurity will guarantee that the majority will always be tethered to the apron-strings of the great, benevolent white master. This is evident throughout Africa.

Economic development has much less to do with manipulation of fancy economic ratios than with maximising resource-use for the good of the majority.

Zimbabwe's main problem (and that of countries throughout Africa), is one of failing to address grassroots fundamentals, preferring instead to be side-tracked by lofty notions of foreign investor confidence as if we cannot empower our own people to be investors. There is such a thing as domestic-led growth. It is about time Zimbabweans and all Africans deliberately moved away from the "foreign is better and right in everything" mindset and cultivated some confidence in themselves.
Havanyani Matsuvane,
Harare, Zimbabwe

Upsetting the natural balance

MARK COCKER says that it is unfair to blame the British for the release of the European starling into the United States (Starlings in the ascendancy, February 22). The only really unfair thing was his knee-jerk dumping on starlings for their successful colonisation. The parochial woodpeckers-kicked-out-of-the-cactus and eating-all-the-chicken-feed anecdotes are typical of local incidents blown up out of proportion by statist naturalists, yearning for US wildlife to revert to some unspecified Eden where all original species are eternally native.

The introduction of non-native species is insignificant compared with man's gargantuan butchery of animal habitats. Increasingly, scientific evidence strongly suggests this to be the real problem. When man does his mindless thing, native species often have a tough time adapting; indeed, some become extinct. Other species that *can* adapt — non-natives among them — move in.

Clearly, the cause of native species would be much better served if the likes of your correspondent worked to mitigate the impact of man.
(Dr) Christopher Panton,
Danville, California, USA

I WAS disappointed to see the Guardian Weekly using emotive and irrational language in dealing with a serious conservation problem (Lustful duck faces "avian genocide", March 1). The proposed culling of 3,500 feral ducks in the UK to save a whole species (the white-headed duck) from extinction is an unpleasant job, but a necessary one. It has nothing to do with "eugenics", "racism" or "genocide", and everything to do with the conservation of biodiversity. To put the figure into perspective, every year more than 1 million ducks are shot for "sport" in the UK.
(Dr) Andy J Green,
Seville, Spain

IN STATING that hares often do best in areas where they are most frequently hunted, Mark Cocker (A history of hare loss, March 22) is perpetuating a frequent claim of hare-coursers. However, I welcome his mention of the brutality of hare-coursing. Until Parliament backs a bill to outlaw the hunting of wild animals with dogs, these cruel and damaging sports will continue and the sight of a March hare, so vividly described by him, will become increasingly rare.
Rachel Chapman,
Cranbrook, Kent

Briefly

PAULINE Melville's question on the similarity in "dynastic politics" between India's Italian-born Sonia Gandhi and Guyana's American-born Janet Jagan is misplaced (March 29). Unlike Gandhi, Jagan had played numerous active political roles while her husband, Cheddi, was alive. Cheddi Jagan summarised her career in a short sentence in his book The West On Trial: My Fight For Guyana's Freedom: "At one and the same time, she combined three jobs — housewife, party secretary and minister." In the past she has held the ministerial portfolios of home affairs and of labour, health and housing. She was also once named deputy Speaker. Whereas, until recently, Sonia Gandhi's role was that of a housewife of a prominent politician. She did not even become an Indian citizen until after Rajiv Gandhi had settled down as prime minister.
(Prof) Robi Chakravorti,
Sacramento, California, USA

BINYAMIN Netanyahu's spokesman is quoted as saying that the European approach is "so pro-Palestinian and one-sided" that the only possible mediator is the United States (March 15). The latter, of course, is so even-handed that it has shelled out billions of dollars to support Israel and to provide the arms and ammunition that have found their targets in Palestinian bodies.
R M Prokhovnik,
Birchgrove, NSW, Australia

I CAN understand what is meant by a brilliant mathematician or a brilliant composer, but what is a "brilliant gynaecologist" (April 5)?
(Dr) Paul Scotti,
Auckland, New Zealand

RICHARD TILT argues that black people are more likely to suffer positional asphyxia than whites and that the causes are physiological (April 5). He's right. People with black skins rather than white (a physiological difference) are indeed more likely to be strangled by prison officers. Or have I misunderstood him?
Roy Smith,
London

I WAS fascinated to read that 29.48 per cent of Brussels firemen will in future be Flemish (April 5). Assuming we're talking unit-firemen, I calculate that future platoons must incorporate exactly 1,273 men each, of which 51 will be Flemish. This works out at 29.4798 per cent, or 29.48 per cent if we're being slapdash and rounding off to two decimal places. These European Commission directives must be catching.
Paul Clark,
Amsterdam, Netherlands

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Students join fray in Iran crisis

David Hirst in Beirut and agencies

IRANIAN students called off a planned protest at Tehran university on Monday in support of the city's jailed mayor, Gholamhossein Karbaschi, which feuding moderate and hardline clerics had warned could lead to a violent confrontation.

Student backers of the moderate president, Mohammed Khatami, had called the demonstration to support both the president and Mr Karbaschi against the dominant conservatives, headed by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Like other moderates, the students see the mayor's arrest as a purely political "quasi-coup": an attempt to bring down the government.

The interior minister, Abdollah Nouri, a Khatamist, was reported to have given the students permission to stage their protest. But, in a sign of confusion in high places, the cabinet urged them to call it off so as to "safeguard social tranquillity".

Reza Burbur, a spokesman for the students' Unity Consolidation Bureaux, said the protest was cancelled "to honour the request of the government as well as the president".

Meanwhile another student group called a pro-government protest on Tuesday at the university in the southern city of Shiraz.

The cancellation of the Tehran protest came as the government newspaper Iran suggested that the mayor, arrested on April 4 on corruption charges, may soon be released.

Government leaders from both factions have met twice since the arrest to search for ways to resolve the dispute, with Ayatollah Khamenei attempting to arbitrate.

The arrest and planned trial of the mayor has emerged as the most serious episode yet in the power struggle between moderate reformists and conservatives. Neither side's leader has taken a public position, striving to resolve the crisis behind the scenes. But with public opinion largely rallying to the moderates, the affair has become a symbolic trial of strength which neither can afford to lose.

Only Mr Karbaschi's release would satisfy the moderates, but Ayatollah Khamenei would be loath to permit it. On the other hand, the trial of one of his key supporters would not only humiliate President Khatami, it would all but guarantee the escalation of the crisis, leading to public disturbances and their suppression by security forces under conservative control.

Even if the big three hammer out some face-saving compromise, it can be only a short-term solution. [illegible] somewhere else. Supporters of the influential and irrepressible Ayatollah Montazeri, under house arrest in Qum, are again agitating on his behalf. The national security council is warning them to stop.

The crisis has aggravated personal, political and constitutional conflicts at the heart of a regime in which the Khatamists are mainly represented in a cabinet that has little or no jurisdiction over state institutions still in the grip of the conservatives.

The moderates enjoy growing support from public opinion. Nearly 700 mayors called on President Khatami to "prevent honest officials from being sacrificed to partisan political goals".

Even some conservative mullahs have come out against the judiciary. Ayatollah Khashani warned that "any escalation of the crisis would be like presenting our enemies with a petrol canister to set alight".

[illegible] ready to take to the streets. The interior minister has set up a "committee for the defence of Karbaschi", and called for a referendum.

Palestinian police seize Hamas killer

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

PALESTINIAN police last weekend arrested a leading Islamist militant suspected of killing the Hamas master bomber Muhi al-Din Sharif as friction between Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority and the fundamentalists increased.

Imad Awadallah was captured at a cafe in the West Bank city of Ramallah. "This morning we seized Imad Awadallah, who is accused by his colleagues in the [Hamas] cell of killing Sharif," said Tayeb Abdel-Rahim, a senior aide to Mr Arafat who is heading the inquiry into Sharif's death.

Sharif, who was accused by Israel of masterminding a string of suicide bombings, was found dead beside an exploded car in Ramallah two weeks ago.

Mr Awadallah is suspected of shooting Sharif before another Hamas member, Ghassan al-Adassi, allegedly booby-trapped the car to explode three hours later, a Palestinian official said. Mr Adassi is one of several members of Hamas's armed wing, Izzedine al Qassam, arrested in a Palestinian crackdown since Sharif's death.

"The security apparatus has questioned [Awadallah] and now we have further direct confirmation that Sharif was shot dead before the car exploded," Mr Abdel-Rahim said.

The Palestinian Authority claims that Sharif was killed in an internal Hamas power struggle. The group denies this, accusing the authority of collaborating with Israel in Sharif's murder.

In a leaflet faxed to Reuters news agency in Jerusalem, Hamas demanded the release of its members and accused the authority of using the detainees to try to "silence" it. The authority closed down Reuters' office in Gaza last week because it had published Hamas statements.

Hundreds of Hamas activists demonstrated in the West Bank city of Nablus last weekend, calling for attacks against Israel.

Netanyahu's view, page 16



Ugandan soldiers train in the early morning in Gulu, headquarters of government efforts to hold off attacks from rebel groups, some based across the border in Congo PHOTOGRAPH: BRENNAN LINSLEY

Rebels unite to threaten Museveni

Anna Borzello in Kampala

A COALITION force of Ugandan rebels, Sudanese government troops and former fighters of the ousted Zairean president, Mobutu Sese Seko, is operating from bases in Garamba National Park in Congo, according to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Garamba, in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, borders Sudan to the north and is 100km from the Ugandan border.

The source said the force comprised 3,000 ex-Mobutu troops, 1,500 Ugandan rebels and several hundred SPLA deserters and Sudanese government troops.

The claim was confirmed by Uganda's acting defence minister, Major-General Salim Saleh. "We know they are in the park. We are tracking their movements," he said.

The SPLA source said the Mobutu supporters fled to Garamba in February 1997 after their defeat by the forces of President Laurent Kabila, who seized the capital, Kinshasa, three months later.

The Sudanese soldiers and Ugandan rebels joined the group in March 1997, after a joint SPLA and Ugandan government offensive in South Sudan captured the Uganda/Sudan border for the SPLA.

During the March offensive the Sudanese bases of the Ugandan rebel West Nile Bank Front were destroyed. Hundreds of WNBF rebels were killed and more than 1,000 surrendered. But 1,500 rebels and several hundred Sudanese government soldiers escaped to Garamba.

The source said that although the three factions in Garamba had different goals, Sudan's National Islamic Front (NIF) government had been able to co-ordinate their activities.

In December the leaders of the three factions flew to Sudan's capital, Khartoum, where they agreed to unite to attack the SPLA rear bases. In return, the NIF government has agreed to help WNBF rebels overthrow Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, and to help Mobutu's supporters to oust Mr Kabila in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Since the start of the year there have been airdrops into Garamba by Sudanese government Antonov jets, the source said.

The NIF government hopes that by destabilising Uganda and its allies in the Great Lakes region it will be able to destroy support for the SPLA, which has been fighting domination by the Islamist North since 1993.

It is the first time that SPLA or Ugandan officials have admitted that there are opposition forces in Garamba.

● The Sudanese government has acknowledged that 52 student conscripts drowned while trying to flee a military camp outside Khartoum, newspapers reported on Monday. The first government comment followed reports by opposition groups that 129 conscripts had been killed in the incident on April 2.

Garamba National Park
150km
Juba
SUDAN
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
Gulu
UGANDA
Kampala

The Week

THE US tobacco industry walked away from a settlement with the government over smoking-related lawsuits estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars. It claimed the deal would bankrupt leading companies. Washington Post, page 15

TROOPS led by Nato arrested two Bosnian Serbs, Miroslav Kvocka and Mladen Radic, both indicted in 1995 for crimes against civilian prisoners at Omarska detention camp.

NEARLY 100 civilians and Muslim rebels were killed in Algeria during celebrations of the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice.

SERGEI [illegible] down a hostile parliament to win greater support than expected in his first, unsuccessful attempt to be confirmed as Russia's prime minister. His nomination was expected to be put to a fresh vote this week.

MANUEL Pérez Martínez, a defrocked Spanish priest and one of Latin America's most charismatic guerrilla leaders, died of hepatitis in Colombia at the age of 62. His death was announced in the week which 36 people were killed in fighting between the army and rebels.

MORE THAN 90 miners were feared dead in northern Tanzania after flash floods caused pits to collapse.

AT LEAST 41 people were killed as tornadoes and thunderstorms, fed partly by El Niño, blasted across three states in the southeastern US. Washington Post, page 15

LAWYERS for P W Botha were trying to arrange a deal to let South Africa's last [illegible] apartheid-era president appear before a unique private sitting of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, hours before his scheduled court appearance for refusing to testify.

A BOMB exploded in a park in the heart of Istanbul's tourist district, wounding nine people.

MALAYSIA, hit hard by a water shortage in the capital Kuala Lumpur, is now struggling to deal with fires breaking out in many parts of the country because of drought.

FATHER Patrick Sullivan, the only Roman Catholic priest from the US resident in Cuba, says he is being forced to leave his parishes after falling foul of government authorities.

A LEADING environmental group, the World Wide Fund for Nature, criticised Japan for killing 440 whales for scientific research.

Howard set to call poll on land rights

Christopher Zinn in Canberra

AUSTRALIANS face the prospect of an election focused on Aboriginal issues after the senate refused to endorse a federal bill to curtail native land rights.

The upper house's rejection last week of John Howard's 10-point plan on native title gives the prime minister the trigger to dissolve both houses of parliament and go to the polls.

It will be the first federal election to be fought largely on Aboriginal policy and follows a high court ruling that Aborigines may make land claims on pastoral and mining leases.

The so-called Wik decision, called after the Queensland tribe that won the action two years ago, has dominated federal politics for the past year. Two years ago the High Court ruled in favour of the Wik people, who in the fifties were evicted from their lands to make way for a 110-year mining lease. The Wik claim that native title could co-exist with pastoral and mining leases opened a Pandora's box that divided Australian society.

Fears that Aboriginese could now claim freehold land, and even suburban backyards, have gripped the white community, especially outback farmers.

Mr Howard is likely to call the poll — labelled a race-based election by the opposition Labor party — by October 29.

Opinion polls suggest his Liberal-National party coalition government will win, but the Wik debate has polarised the country, pitting the urban majority against those in the bush who have the most to lose.

Tempers are already running high on the once bipartisan issue of Aboriginal affairs, with robust exchanges between MPs. Press photographers have even been banned from taking pictures in the chamber because of the sensitive nature of the debate.

Last week the Labor deputy opposition leader, Gareth Evans, shouted at Mr Howard, saying: "This bloke seems to be never so happy as when he's bashing black fellas."

But after 18 months of reports about the generation of Aboriginal children stolen from their parents, black deaths in custody and the appalling health and living standards of many indigenous Australians, much of the damage has already been done.

One Aboriginal leader has called the prime minister "racist scum", [illegible] said last year that only the "white sheets and burning cross" were missing from government policy.

A senior Aboriginal negotiator, Lois O'Donoghue, said last week: "From today onwards this is no longer the Native Title Amendment Bill, it is the colonial title amendment bill."

Gatjil Djerrkura, the head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, threatened to resign. "It seems we can have no faith in the government to protect our existing rights," he said.

The Wik issue comes after a high court decision five years ago which overturned the legal doctrine used by the first settlers to claim Australia for the British Crown in the 18th century. The newly recognised native title to land was celebrated by the then Labor government, but finding a politically acceptable way to share land has proved difficult.

Some outback cattle and sheep station owners have found their properties the subject of conflicting claims from Aboriginal groups, some of which they say are unknown to them. And the mining industry says uncertainty caused by the debate is affecting the whole natural resources sector.



A security man gives the world a straight look from his lopsided sentry-box on the Oriental Plaza building site in Beijing PHOTO: GREG BAKER

Pilgrims trampled to death

PANIC ripped through a crowd of more than 2 million Muslim pilgrims on the last day of the annual hadj near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, last week, leaving at least 118 trampled to death, *writes Jonathan Steele*.

The disaster struck the vast throng, already sweltering in 38C desert heat, as it surged over the Jamraat bridge. Some fell off and others were crushed in the panic. Most of the victims were elderly pilgrims from Indonesia and Malaysia. Some reports put the number of dead at more than 150.

Helicopters had earlier tried to help cool the crowd, hovering overhead to spot pilgrims fainting, while small bags of chilled water were thrown from lorries.

But police using loudspeakers may have sparked the tragedy by pleading for people to move along quickly. Other police with batons made room for pilgrims wanting to escape the crowds.

The pilgrimage is a once-in-a-lifetime obligation for able-bodied Muslims. But it has been marked by several appalling accidents in recent years. The Saudi authorities have stepped up safety measures, banning the use of cooking stoves and erecting tents in well-ordered rows.

Mexican soldiers break up Zapatista town council

Phil Gunson in Mexico City

MEXICAN authorities in the southern state of Chiapas have dismantled the latest pro-Zapatista "autonomous municipality" in a pre-dawn raid involving hundreds of police and soldiers. Nine Mexicans — including community leaders and a university professor — and 12 foreign observers were arrested during the operation last week.

On Monday the 12 foreigners were expelled from the country. The Mexican foreign minister, Rosario Green, said they had meddled in the troubled state and would have been in breach of the law anywhere in the world. On the same day the state government arrested seven more people on allegations of kidnapping a peasant and aggression against police officers.

The "Ricardo Flores Magon" municipality was established last week in Taniperla, which officially belongs to the municipality of Ocosingo. It was the 32nd autonomous local authority set up by civilian supporters of the Zapatista guerrillas since late 1994. The government regards them as illegal and provocative.

Claiming that he did not wish to create a climate of confrontation, the governor of Chiapas, Roberto Albores Guillén, none the less declared that he would "definitely not allow any group to violate the legal framework of Chiapas".

The diocese of San Cristóbal expressed concern, "above all at the disproportionate scale of the operation". Its spokesman, Father Gonzalo Ituarte, pointed out there had not been an operation on this scale "to arrest those who have been committing murders in Chiapas" for some time — a reference to paramilitary groups such as the one involved in the pre-Christmas Acteal massacre of pro-Zapatista peasants.

Two years ago the government and the rebels signed an agreement sanctioning the establishment of new municipalities, in accordance with indigenous traditions. But the government is only now seeking to translate the indigenous rights agreement into law, and the Zapatistas say the bill does not reflect what was agreed.

Minister forces Kenya to hold inquiry into torture

Lucy Hannan in Garissa

IT HAS taken a cabinet minister's threat to resign to make the Kenyan government launch an inquiry into allegations of police torture and sexual humiliation during an operation against bandits in Northeastern province.

Maalim Mohammed, a staunch supporter of President Daniel arap Moi since 1983, produced video evidence of torture in his constituency after the police commissioner, Duncan Wachira, dismissed the complaints. He says he will resign if proved wrong and is supported by five MPs from the ruling Kanu party and two from the opposition.

Thirty-eight men and one woman are said to have been caught up in a special operation last month in the village of Mbalambala, 120km north of the provincial capital, Garissa.

They say they are the victims of a "collective punishment" by a police unit looking for guns and bandits. After the operation, 15 people were taken to Garissa with flesh wounds, whip lacerations, genital injuries and complaints of limb paralysis.

In Garissa the "Mbalambala victims" are at the centre of claims and counter-claims by Kanu members and the security forces about the government's handling of unrest in the area.

The provincial police officer at Garissa, Jeremiah Matagaro, did not deny the allegations of torture but said they were exaggerated.

Remote, under-developed, and with a history of secessionist sentiment, Northeastern province has been plagued by banditry — and notorious police massacres — since independence. The unrest was exacerbated in the early 1990s when hundreds of thousands of Somalis fled fighting in their homeland and set up refugee camps.

Police, civilians and politicians all claim that the camps are being used by gangs who have brought sophisticated arms into the country.

Plant species 'on the point of extinction'

John Vidal

SCIENTISTS warned last week that one in eight of the world's plant species are on the point of extinction, with unknown implications for human survival, culture and medicine.

The first comprehensive international study of the world's threatened plants draws on data from more than 200 countries, and puts more than 34,000 plants out of a global total of about 270,000 on the Red List of plants facing extinction.

A further 6,522 species are likely to join them in the near future, and many others are declining rapidly round the world, say the authors of the Threatened Plants Report, compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, in Britain.

The authors of the report, which has taken a team of botanists more than 15 years to compile from 2,000 data sources, believe the figure is just the tip of the iceberg. Scientific figures are seriously lacking in parts of Asia, South America and Africa.

"This is a very conservative figure. We are on the brink of a serious wave of extinction. The situation will deteriorate unless vastly increased action is taken now," said Harriet Gillett, one of the report's authors.

Conservationists reacted with alarm. "If anything is going to frighten the people of the world into doing something about plant conservation, this is it. Every plant species that goes is a nail in the coffin of government sustainability policies," said David Bellamy of the Conservation Foundation.

The report nails the popular idea that developing countries are responsible for most species loss. The highest number of species known to be facing extinction are in the United States (4,669), Australia (2,245), South Africa (2,215), Turkey (1,876) and Mexico (1,593). Britain has 24 plant species (1.1 per cent of its total) on its national list of species threatened with extinction, but only 19 are on the new international list.

The British government was further embarrassed at the report's finding that the place with the world's highest species loss is St Helena island in the Atlantic, where more than 40 per cent of all native plants face extinction. St Helena is governed by Britain as a dependent territory and its nature has been largely ignored.

However, the report warns that the league table of countries facing the most loss of their native plants is skewed because most botanical research has been done in rich countries. Scientists and environmentalists warned that the implications were enormous.

"Most of the developing world depends on plant species for survival. Losing plants means losing ants, worms, birds and mammals", said a spokesman for the Worldwide Fund for Nature.

Tropical forest loss, which reached record levels in 1997 following fires in Indonesia and Brazil, is believed to be destroying up to 27,000 species of plants and animals a year.

The cause of the dramatic loss of species is widely believed to be forest destruction, intensive farming, toxic chemicals, mass tourism and overuse of land.

Nature's witness, page 29

Army scares out 'ghost' schools

Richard Galpin in Islamabad

THOUSANDS of Pakistani troops returned to barracks last weekend after completing an unprecedented investigation into widespread corruption in the state education system.

For two weeks soldiers had been visiting state primary schools in the central province of Punjab in an attempt to stamp out corruption which the authorities estimate costs the province millions of dollars each year.

"There's a big mafia in the education department," Shahbaz Sharif, the chief minister of Punjab, said. "It's a den of corruption and that's why we wanted the army's support to tackle this problem."

The investigators were told to focus on the phenomenon of "ghost" schools. Of more than 50,000 primary schools in the Punjab, it is estimated that as many as 7,000 exist only on paper. In many rural areas corrupt officials and teachers simply pocket the money allocated by the authorities to set up and run new schools.

They go to extreme lengths to cover the deception, submitting imaginary lists of teachers and pupils and even exam results to convince the authorities that the schools exist.

"We have found a number of ghost schools in this district," said Major Haroon Rashid, who is responsible for a small area on the outskirts of the provincial capital, Lahore. "We've also come across fake appointments, fake teachers, fake transfers of staff, fake accounts and fake expense claims," he said.

The soldiers, who received special training for the operation, interviewed staff and cross-checked accounts with official records at every school they visited. The authorities are promising tough measures after the army's findings are handed over in the next few weeks.

"We will remove all the thousands of absent teachers and we will dismiss all those corrupt officials," Mr Sharif said. "And we will take to task all those who have pocketed the nation's scarce resources."

Even so, experts say the investigation is just a step towards a radical overhaul of an education system that is deeply flawed. Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world: about 35 per cent of its 130 million people can read and write. It is estimated that up to 10 million children are unable to go to school because there are not enough places. Almost half of those who do attend primary school drop out.

The problems are the legacy of successive governments that have put spending on defence and prestige projects above the basic needs of a developing country, such as education and health facilities.

Although the federal government announced last month that it would double education spending within the next five years and aim to double the literacy rate by 2010, many remain sceptical. Observers say only an immediate nationwide education campaign will enable Pakistan to catch up with the rest of the region.

"Chasing ghost schools and asking the army to do it is not as good an alternative as asking the army to teach children," said Dr Mahbub ul Haq, president of the Human Development Centre in Islamabad. "We now have 600,000 soldiers scattered all over the country. They are quite well educated and they could be mobilised to teach the 10 million children who are currently out of school."

US chemical firm admits to PR errors

John Vidal

MONSANTO, the huge United States chemical company that is facing mounting opposition in Europe as it spearheads the rush to hi-tech foods, has called for genetically modified (GM) crops to be separated at source from traditional foods and has admitted that it has misjudged consumers' concerns.

In an interview with the Guardian, two Monsanto directors also challenged the British food industry to label all traditional food as "GM-free". The industry, which has strongly resisted this form of words, prefers to label selectively products derived wholly from GM crops.

As Monsanto prepared to mount a multi-million dollar public relations campaign to convince European shoppers of the ecological and global benefits of GM foods, it admitted that it had underestimated ethical and scientific concerns and had pushed its products on to the market without explanation.

"We made mistakes which we regret. We should have listened more carefully," said Philip Angell, Monsanto's US director of corporate communications.

The scale and speed of the GM food revolution has astonished observers and worried critics, who see a further global intensification of farming and no choice for consumers. Last Sunday Monsanto confirmed that 20 million hectares of its soya, maize and cotton are now planted in the US, compared with 0.8 million hectares in 1996.

The company expects GM crops to double in area within two years as hi-tech varieties of cassava, potatoes and oil seed rape become available, and to grow exponentially early next century as GM rice and wheat, two of the world's biggest crops, are developed.

Until now, it has claimed that segregation of GM foods is unnecessary, impractical or too costly, a line that European governments and the food industry have broadly followed as imports of the company's GM soya have flooded in and been mixed with traditional crops.

Americans reluctant to pay their dues

Washington diary

Martin Kettle

THIS WEEK means only one thing for most adult Americans. It is the week in which they must pay their taxes. And since paying taxes is something the average American does with singular ill grace, this week also underlines one of the most important differences between civil society in the United States and its counterparts in many other parts of the world.

You do not need to live, work and pay taxes in the US to know the importance that hostility to tax has played in the country's history. This is a nation that was born out of a tax revolt against the British — and it still shows. The confidence and power of anti-tax movements has been a leitmotiv of political life in the United States on many occasions since the Boston Tea Party.

In Britain, attitude surveys have repeatedly shown that large majorities of the population believe in the principle of redistributive taxation. Even during the anti-tax Thatcher years, the reliable British Social Attitudes Survey found a steady increase in the proportion of voters who said they would be willing to pay more taxes in order to improve public services and to help the least well-off. In the US, however, the reverse is true. This month an opinion poll for Fox TV found US opinion divided roughly two-to-one against a similar "pay more and get more" proposition. It was appropriate that Fox should have carried this report, because the station's owner, Rupert Murdoch, has long been an enthusiastic non-payer of tax. Yet the resentment that runs through much of the popular discussion of taxation is predicated on the same belief — that most people neither approve of taxation nor are willing to pay what they really owe.



The hostility that Americans direct toward their tax collection agency, the Internal Revenue Service, is immediately striking to anyone who is more familiar with British attitudes. The British are, at most, resignedly world-weary towards the Inland Revenue. Modern Americans, though, really hate the IRS. Granted, there are differences, and some of the inquisitorial activities of the IRS that were detailed in evidence to Congress last year were at times more than hair-raising. Nevertheless these incidents cannot adequately explain the language and tone in which US politicians, media and ordinary citizens discuss the service.

Americans talk about the IRS as though it is a secret police force. They talk about the fear that it engenders in them, about the threat that it embodies, and about the importance — and the difficulty — of standing up to it. The language that even mainstream Americans routinely use to describe the IRS is not dissimilar to the loathing formerly directed towards the KGB.

In his recent book Those Dirty Rotten Taxes, the economic historian Charles Adams approvingly reprints a cartoon that shows three "terrorists": an Arab gunman, an Irish bomber and an IRS man in a suit carrying nothing more lethal than his briefcase.

Another equally tendentious but undeniably effective recent book about the IRS by Shelley Davis is entitled Unbridled Power. Both the cartoon and the title accurately represent what a significant proportion, possibly a majority, of Americans believe. The resentment against unbridled power is not proportional to the level of taxation or to the state of the economy.

The IRS is owed more than $80 billion in unpaid taxes, and has calculated that 17 cents of every tax dollar that Americans owe is never paid. This is mostly because rich business people overstate their tax deductible expenses or because the black economy continues to thrive. Significantly, the proportion of unpaid taxes is not thought to have altered much during the past 20 years.

What has changed, however, is the public acceptability of attacking the principles and practices of the tax system.

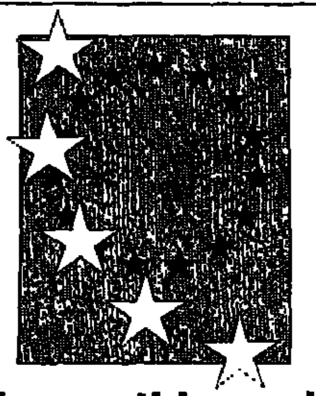
The revolt against tax was at the heart of the Reagan revolution of the 1980s. It was a crucial factor in the unseating of George Bush, who had told the voters in 1988 that he was a true believer — "No New Taxes" — but had discovered too late that tax is not an attitude of mind but an instrument of macro-economic and social policy. And it continues to drive the increasingly confused Republican revolution of the 1990s. The Texas Republican Bill Archer, who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, is leading the fight to abolish income tax and says that the IRS must be "torn out by the roots". Republican presidential hopefuls are increasingly driven to outbid one another with "radical" tax plans that shift wealth from the poor to the rich still further.

All of this has provided a basic constraint on the politics of the Clinton presidency. Just as he was forced, against his own instincts, to tack to the right on the role of government, so the same is true of his policy on tax. But whereas he has found ways of reinventing and restoring faith in government, Clinton has not succeeded in reinventing or restoring faith in taxation. If anything, the reverse has happened.

Early in his presidency Clinton at least used to attack tax loopholes and the culture of tax cheating. In the boom years of late 1990s America, when the pressure for spending is lessened, there isn't much of an attempt to pursue that target any longer. As the Washington Post pointed out last week: "There is a strong link between tax evasion and mistrust of government."

Above the entrance of the IRS headquarters in Washington the words to Oliver Wendell Holmes are carved in stone: "Taxes are the price we pay for a civilised society." This is not a view that plays well with today's swing voters. But it is true. One day, when the economic boom falters, the US is going to have to challenge the inherited assumptions that tax is bad and that tax-cheating is acceptable. But not, one senses, just yet.

Black and white economies divide EU



Europe this week

Martin Walker

THE EUROPEAN Union has just learnt that it is more than $1,000 billion richer than it thought it was. Its total gross domestic product may be poised to reach $10,000 billion a year. It all depends on the accuracy of new estimates for the size of Europe's underground, undeclared and unmeasured economy.

High levels of taxation and regulation have driven Europe to develop a massive black economy, the European Commission reported last week. It is equivalent in size to Britain's gross domestic product, and employs up to 28 million people. By contrast, the official total of the EU's unemployed is 17.5 million. This alternative economy is distorting tax, welfare and financial systems, and is inflating unemployment rates across the continent.

According to the report, which was prepared as part of a series of surveys of the EU labour market, after the EU Jobs Summit in Luxembourg last year, up to one-third of the Greek economy, and up to a quarter of the Italian and Spanish economies, are operating on a strictly cash basis. Britain is estimated to be about average among the 15 EU countries, with a black economy of around 10 per cent — but as much as 13 per cent may be off the books.

Eurostat, the EU's statistical arm, is now working on a new GDP model that will take account of all the plumbers, waiters and cleaning ladies who work strictly for cash, and of the double book-keeping that helps ease Europe's tax burden.

The implications of the EU findings are profound. Since almost half the money paid into the EU budget by each member state is based on GDP figures, Greece, Spain and Italy are underpaying by nearly $16 billion a year. And, because EU structural fund payments are calculated in part on local unemployment rates, these countries are receiving more than their fair share from the Community budget.

Moreover once the new GDP figures are available, United States officials can start to demand that Europe's payments to international bodies such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund should be revised upwards. The arguments within the Nato alliance about burden-sharing will also take on a new edge.

Characteristically, the EU is deeply ambivalent about the correct policy response. "The strategy now provides an opportunity for combating undeclared work through EU co-ordinated action, if this is deemed necessary," said the EU's employment commissioner, Padraig Flynn, in classic bureaucratic language.

Under the traditional European social model this strategy would involve more tax inspectors and more rules to clamp down on the black economy. But that may be shooting the messenger. The Commission appears to accept that the thriving underground economy is a rational response to the overtaxed and over-regulated European system.

But it also warns of the social costs of the underground boom. "The situation is particularly damaging for undeclared workers who are officially 'inactive', as they forgo all the benefits derived from working with a formal contract, such as training, a specific career profile, pay rises, ultimately harming their employability and job prospects," according to the Commission.

So while the black economy is seen as a rational, and even inevitable, response to rigid labour markets and high taxes, the Commission reckons that it damages the broader social and economic factors.

In short the black economy once again raises the traditional tension between the low tax and deregulated Anglo-Saxon model that produces lots of jobs but wide income disparities, and the European social model that levies high taxes on those in work to finance the welfare state for the rest.

But there is a subtle twist to the argument. Advocates of the European social model can argue that there is no evidence that high taxes necessarily spur the black market. Finland, Denmark, Austria and Sweden have the smallest black economies even though they have some of the highest tax rates in Europe. This, however, steers the argument into the murky waters of national and regional characteristics, and stereotypes, of the law-abiding north against the cheating south.

The figures for the black economy are estimated by the Commission on the basis of national reports and analyses. The figures are likely to prove controversial, particularly in Greece, Italy and Spain, because they could be used to increase their payments to and cut their receipts from Europe. There will be some furious arguments in Luxembourg where the Eurostat statisticians will have to come up with an acceptable way of measuring something which, by definition, defies conventional statistical tools.

On the brighter side it all means that the EU economy is bigger and healthier than was previously thought as it heads into the era of the new single currency. Europe also learned last week that the euro will be launched on a rising tide of industrial production, growing at an average 4.3 per cent across the EU, while unemployment across the continent is dropping, most sharply among the young.

Blood service chief sacked for high costs and poor results

Ewen MacAskill and Sarah Boseley

THE HEAD of the National Blood Authority, Sir Colin Walker, was sacked by the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, last week following a damning report into the performance of the body that runs the transfusion service.

Mr Dobson's action came amid a crisis of confidence in the service and fears for the blood supply. He was "concerned about the overall performance of the authority" and said that those at the top of the organisation had to take responsibility.

Sir Colin, who had refused to resign from the £10,000-a-year part-time job as chairman of the NBA, was a Tory appointee and presided over a period of reorganisation bitterly opposed by health professionals, unions and MPs.

He said: "I decline to comment, I don't think it will help the blood service by anybody making any comments other than to encourage the team in all its efforts. It doesn't worry me unduly what people say about me."

The NBA has been repeatedly criticised for spending much more money now than it did before the reforms began three years ago but delivering a poorer service. Although it stated there would be no shortages, blood stocks fell to dangerously low levels both last winter and the winter before.

Last autumn Mr Dobson ordered an investigation by Professor John Cash, a former president of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. His report said: "The NBA's reorganisation policies and their implementation have resulted in considerable damage to this much-loved and respected people's service." Mr Dobson described the report as a "damning indictment".

Professor Cash looked in particular at the transfer of bulk processing and testing of blood from Liverpool to Manchester, which became the sole centre for northwest England. He said that there was a serious crisis and widespread loss of confidence in the NBA, which had become isolated to a disturbing degree from operational realities.

Sir Colin will be replaced by Mike Fogden, former chief executive of the Employment Service. Mr Fogden was appointed by the Conservative government, a point that headed off Tory criticism that Mr Dobson was replacing Conservative placemen with Labour ones. It will be for Mr Fogden to decide whether the chief executive, John Adey, should also be sacked.

Mr Dobson said he had called in Sir Colin to say he was concerned about the authority's performance. "I explained that in view of the extra difficulties which the blood service is likely to face, I was not confident, in the light of past performance, that it was in the interests of the NHS for him to remain in the chair of the NBA."

He added: "He has refused to resign. Today I have dismissed him."

Dr Evan Harris, the Liberal Democrat health spokesman, said: "This confirms that the Tory 'rationalisation' of England's blood services was a disaster. The service is now more inefficient than it was before Tory health ministers started meddling with it."

'Reward' for hospitals

David Brindle

THE Government set up a £32 million "performance fund" last week to reward health authorities that successfully cut hospital waiting lists — and to pay for task forces to help those not doing enough.

The move came as a leading health economist warned that patients were waiting longer for treatment and that the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, faced an uphill task to meet his target of cutting the numbers waiting in England by 100,000 before next April.

John Appleby, senior lecturer in health economics at the University of East Anglia, said a 10-year fall in the number of patients waiting more than a year for treatment had been reversed by an 18 per cent increase since last March. He said: "If anything is to blame, it is probably that the NHS — from ministers down — took their collective eye off the ball."

Health authorities and hospitals would have to achieve unprecedented results to make "a significant dent" in the country's waiting list of almost 1.3 million patients, Mr Appleby said. "Even after September 1996, when the health service treated a record number of people from the waiting list, the number waiting still went up by nearly 100,000 the following March."

Of the extra £500 million in NHS funding announced in last month's Budget, £320 million is going towards cutting waiting lists in England to below the 1.2 million inherited from the previous government.

Mr Dobson announced last week that £288 million of the English money would be distributed among health authorities to help them reach agreed waiting-list targets, and £32 million held centrally in a performance fund.

The fund would be used to give individual authorities further sums or "rewards" of up to 10 per cent of their initial allocations if they exceeded their targets. It would also be used to fund remedial action by task forces. "That could include sending into health authorities and NHS trusts teams of managers and clinicians," he said.

Authorities have until April 24 to agree on plans for cutting waiting lists. The £288 million will then be shared out between them.

● Researchers say they have evidence of systematic racial and sexual discrimination in the NHS.

Female nurses progress more slowly up the promotion ladder than do men despite making up a disproportionate number of the profession, according to a study by Stephen Pudney and Michael Shields, of the University of Leicester. As a result, their lifetime earnings are much lower. The discrepancy can total £50,000 over the course of a career — almost enough to buy an average house.

Black and Asian nurses, also over-represented in the profession, suffer a similar disadvantage compared with their white counterparts, the study finds.

Gay rights campaigners invade the pulpit during the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter sermon to protest at the Church of England's opposition to gay clergy. Peter Tatchell, organiser of the militant group OutRage!, was later charged with riotous behaviour PHOTO: ADRIAN [illegible]

Parishes lose out to bishops

Amelia Gentleman

THE Church Commissioners have significantly cut the amount spent on parish clergy while increasing the salaries and grants paid to bishops, it emerged last week.

Overall spending on bishops, cathedral clergy salaries and housing, cathedral grants and administration has risen from £10.5 million to £18.5 million in 10 years. Over the same period, the amount paid towards clergy salaries and housing fell from £57.4 million to £19.5 million, dropping £8.4 million in the last year.

The commissioners' annual report showed that the Archbishop of Canterbury's salary had passed £50,000, while most clergy remain on stipends of £15,000.

Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat MP for Middlesbrough, said the Church had its "priorities upside down. To the rich shall be given, from the poor shall be taken. There's something seriously wrong when the Church spends its money feather-bedding the bishops rather than on taking the Christian message out to the streets. There's a whiff of hypocrisy about this."

Churchgoers now meet 62 per cent of the clergy's £160 million pay bill, allowing the commissioners to concentrate on protecting the Church's assets.

The reduction in support for local parishes came as the Church fund saw an upturn in its fortunes. Last year assets rose to £3.48 billion from £2.98 billion in 1996, significantly outstripping for the first time the level at which they stood in the late 1980s. At that time, failed property investments — branded "foolish" by the House of Commons — led to an £800 million loss and financial crisis.

Assets last year outperformed the benchmark UK pensions fund average, as commissioners aimed for better long-term returns and a broader spread of risk. The Church's portfolio is no longer so heavily based in property.

Sir Michael Colman, First Church Estates Commissioner, who was appointed in 1993 to rescue the commissioners from financial collapse, denied that excessive amounts were being spent on supporting senior figures.

"I don't think for somebody in the position of the Archbishop of Canterbury that £50,000 is a great deal of money," he said. "I think we should recognise that the whole level of payment in the Church is extremely modest."

● George Austin, Archdeacon of York, is considering early retirement because of ill health and frustration at what he sees as the sidelining of traditional beliefs in the Church of England.

Booked into hospital next month for treatment for sleeplessness, the Venerable Austin, aged 67, said he was "clinging on by his fingertips" to his defence of the High Church corner from within the priesthood. He accused liberals of reneging on compromise and "driving out" traditionalist priests one by one.

And the groom wore a green anorak

Michael White

THE Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and his fiancée, Gaynor Regan, last week made New Labour history when they sacrificed a sure-fire Fleet Street photo-opportunity in favour of Old Labour privacy by staging a dawn raid on Tunbridge Wells register office.

Instead of tying the knot, in what was a second marriage for both Mr Cook and his diary secretary, in their grand country house at Chevening, near Sevenoaks, Mr and Mrs Cook opted for the register office and what aides called "a private event free from media intrusion" — 10 days earlier than planned.

To make sure they would evade the Fleet Street paparazzi, they also arranged at the last minute not to be married at 5pm, but before normal matrimonial opening hours, at 8.30am. Building works and a skip outside the door helped spoil any lurking photo-opportunity.

While the Foreign Secretary outflanked the media, he was unable to escape the prying eyes of the construction community. Builder Robert Harman saw the party arrive. "It was just the two of them and two men. I think the men were witnesses, although one of them who was wearing a kilt looked like a minder. Mr Cook was wearing a green anorak-type coat and she was wearing a dark suit."

His colleague, painter Allan Oakeshott, said: "When they came out, [Mr Cook] punched the air." Air, incidentally, that remained confetti-free.

"Robin and Gaynor are delighted to be man and wife. I hope they will be left alone to enjoy the short break they deserve together," said Mr Cook's constituency agent, Jim Devine, understood to be "the man in the kilt".

Conspiracy theorists could not decide whether the Cooks were attempting to upstage the Northern Ireland peace process or, on balance more likely, to marry while media attention was focused on Belfast.



Speaker rebukes Labour spin doctors

Michael White

THE Speaker of the House of Commons, Betty Boothroyd, last week won guarded support from MPs on all sides after warning Tony Blair's ministers not to bypass Parliament when announcing new government policies — and to rein in party "apparatchiks" and media spin doctors who encourage such tactics.

Senior Tories accused Mr Blair of "attempting to adopt a presidential style", while some ministers admitted a problem, but attributed it to Labour's huge majority. "It's easy to neglect this place, but the pendulum will swing back when MPs reassert themselves," said one.

After months of private lobbying and occasional warnings from her chair in the Commons, Miss Boothroyd took a leaf out of the spin doctors' book by giving a rare interview on television to voice concern, days after the revelation that the Prime Minister has been in only 5 per cent of Commons divisions since May 1.

The Speaker, an MP for 25 years, conceded that private leaks and off-the-record briefings had taken place over the years. In the 1950s the "12-day rule" prevented any issue being discussed on television when it was due for debate in the Commons.

But she clearly implied that Labour is taking the skills it learned in 18 years of opposition to new lengths in order to control the media agenda. "All governments have done this. Perhaps other governments have done it more professionally or more successfully than of late . . . it's been rather blatant in the last six months," she said.

"I'm fighting a battle there and I know that in some areas I am winning that battle. There are a lot of senior ministers who are concerned about it and who agree with my attitude and who want to do the right thing, and I hope that I'm bringing it round," she told the BBC.

Asked about party spin doctors, the highly pro-active breed of press spokesmen now in fashion, she said: "There are far too many of what I would term 'apparatchiks' who are working in government departments and who have been accustomed, when a party was in opposition, to want to get the maximum publicity. That's understandable. Now in government they have to be harnessed a little more."

That diplomatic formula translates as meaning that Labour too often still behaves as if it was still in opposition, thinking tactically about the next day's headlines and moulding policy presentation to the needs of direct communication with voters rather than the Commons. The Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, has spoken of the replacement of classic "representative democracy" with a more interactive version.

"My views are very well known in Whitehall at the highest level . . . I have no complaints about the seriousness with which [ministers] accept what I have to say," Miss Boothroyd said.

She again made plain her distaste for some of the ingratiating habits of new Labour members, some of whom complain that the Commons rules are unfair, especially to women.

Warning of the need to win respect, she said: "I can't think of many toadies that have prospered actually, or many toadies whose names have become household names and who have gone down here terribly well. I think independence is important."

Mowlam voted best minister

MO MOWLAM is the Government's most effective minister, Northern Ireland its biggest success and tuition fees for university students its greatest mistake, according to a survey of Tony Blair's first year in power, *writes Michael White*.

The Prime Minister arouses mixed feelings among voters, with 30 per cent dissatisfied, against 42 per cent who think he is doing well, according to the survey by Good Housekeeping magazine.

Its readers are more certain about Minister without Portfolio Peter Mandelson and his £750 million Millennium Dome project in Greenwich, southeast London. By nearly four to one they are not keen on either. Social Security Secretary Harriet Harman's "very satisfied to quite satisfied" rating, at 31 per cent, is also low. By two to one readers think women's issues have not received enough attention.

Ms Mowlam, working as Northern Ireland Secretary while recovering from a brain tumour, is streets ahead of her colleagues, with 79 per cent overall satisfaction rating.

David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, is on 68 per cent; Mr Straw, the Home Secretary, and John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, are on 64 per cent; and Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, is on 44 per cent.

Meanwhile speculation about a cabinet reshuffle surfaced last week amid renewed suggestions that Mr Blair may announce changes shortly. It had been expected that he would hold off until June or July after Britain ended its European presidency.

Mr Mandelson is thought to have given up his quest for a "proper job" in Mr Blair's Cabinet. Many believe reorganisation would see him become an enforcer of government strategy.

Ms Harman appears to have lost her fight to keep her job, despite allies' insistence that she had performed effectively during and since last month's publication of the welfare green paper.

Others expected to be fired are Dr David Clark, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the transport minister Gavin Strang. Alistair Darling, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, is tipped to take over as Social Security Secretary.

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Blunkett faces down jeering teachers

John Carvel

DAVID BLUNKETT, the Education and Employment Secretary, faced down jeering leftwingers at the National Union of Teachers conference in Blackpool on Monday, warning that their behaviour put decent people off joining the profession.

After a resolute defence of the Government's education record during its first 11 months in office, he asked teachers to abandon their victim mentality and become partners in his campaign for higher standards.

Mr Blunkett escaped the ugly scenes that occurred when he addressed the same conference in Blackpool three years ago, but failed to get the standing ovation which greeted his speech last year in the run-up to the general election.

Doug McAvoy, the union's general secretary, said most delegates welcomed the Government's progress in cutting class sizes and expanding education investment, but he won loud applause from moderates and leftwingers when he castigated the unfairness of the policy of naming and shaming failing schools.

At a press conference later, Mr Blunkett said the Government would ignore the NUT's criticism of education action zones and detailed guidelines on how to improve literacy in primary schools. These key parts of the education programme were non-negotiable.

The union had no reason to pursue plans for industrial action to reduce the bureaucratic burden of form-filling. It should respond to the bonfire of red tape he announced on Monday, but if teachers went ahead with the action they should not delude themselves that they could avoid damaging pupils.

"If it was effective, it would disrupt children's education and dislocate our standards agenda," he said.

Mr McAvoy said that the Education Secretary was wrong. Limited industrial action would start in some schools on April 27, but it would affect form-filling for government agencies and not performance in the classroom. The action could escalate in September if Mr Blunkett's promises were not fulfilled, but even then it would not affect pupils' testing or exams.

Mr Blunkett said he did not hear all the jeers from his audience "because they are not all that articulate". Those responsible were a small minority of delegates and a minute proportion of the teaching profession.

After listing the programme of education measures since May, Mr Blunkett said: "We have not managed to wave a magic wand to transform things in the way many people would like, but we have managed to obtain £825 million in England to save the education service."

He was confident about teachers' desire to raise education standards. "Our job is to work with you in partnership . . . slogans won't do it."

A section of delegates on one side of the hall booed when he defended education action zones — clusters of about 20 schools in deprived areas to be run by local authority/business partnerships. The detailed guidelines on how to teach reading and writing were not part of a new "era of imposition" on teachers.

"I ask teachers to stop believing they are victims and start seeing themselves as partners in change. It is easy to shout slogans, it is harder to make it happen on the ground . . . you can be part of the learning age, where inequality and injustice can be set aside."

The reduction to red tape announced by Mr Blunkett will include reduced demands on schools from the Office for Standards in Education, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Teacher Training Agency and local education authorities.

● More than a third of 11- to 16-year-olds have been bullied at school in the past year, and almost one in 10 has missed school because of worries about violence, according to a survey of 4,000 pupils by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers published last week. Fifteen per cent said they had been attacked at school. More than a third were worried about violence.

Reform to end council sleaze

Lucy Ward

THE Government last week unveiled new proposals to root out corruption among councillors and council staff.

In a step ministers hope will prove their commitment to stamping out malpractice, authorities will be required to adopt codes of conduct binding councillors and employees.

Following criticism that the present system allows councils too much power to police themselves, the reforms will see the creation of an independent standards board to investigate corruption claims.

The proposals, published in a consultation paper, Modernising Local Government — A New Ethical Framework, form the final piece in the jigsaw of Labour's local government reforms.

Local government minister Hilary Armstrong said: "If people are to value local government, they must have a bond of trust with their councillors and their councils. They must be confident that they are helping their communities, not themselves."

Under the proposals, every council from metropolitan authorities down to parish councils will bring in its own code of conduct, based on a national model but tailored to suit its own structure. The code will cover issues including the requirement to declare interests, the relationship between councillors and officers, rules on expenses and allowances claims and the use of council facilities.

Where allegations are made, the Standards Board will inquire into them through regional panels, whose members would be chosen by regional chairmen from a local list. Councillors found guilty could face a public dressing down or a maximum five-year ban from holding council office.

The proposals follow wide consultation on recommendations put forward in July by Lord Nolan in a report on standards in local government. The responses stressed the need for an external system of handling corruption claims.



Easter rising . . . Fire fighters are forced to hang on to lamp-posts and road signs as they bring in inflatable boats to rescue residents from the rising waters of Leamington Spa in Warwickshire. April showers became downpours and caused chaos across the nation. The West Midlands was the worst hit — a month's rain fell in 12 hours and the River Avon rose to its highest level for a century PHOTO MAMP

Anger at honour for Japanese emperor

Ewen MacAskill

VETERANS of Japanese prisoner-of-war camps reacted angrily last week when Buckingham Palace confirmed that the Queen is to invest Emperor Akihito of Japan with the Order of the Garter, Britain's highest order of chivalry.

The Emperor will have the honour conferred on him during his visit to Britain next month. The Queen's decision was made after informal discussions with Tony Blair and the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, both of whom supported the move.

Mr Blair, who visited Japan in January, is keen to establish a new, modern relationship with Tokyo and hopes that the war veterans will not create embarrassment by demonstrating during the visit, which is scheduled for May 26-29.

PoW veterans insist they bear no grudge against Emperor Akihito or modern Japan, but see no reason to adopt a compliant attitude as long as Tokyo refuses to pay compensation for slave labour carried out by the PoWs. The veterans have been asking for £14,000 each.

Downing Street secured a partial compromise during Mr Blair's visit but not enough to satisfy the veterans. The Government has worked hard to pave the way for a trouble-free visit, with Mr Blair's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, encouraging the Japanese prime minister to apologise to the British people in the Sun newspaper in January, and the Foreign Office arranging interviews with the Emperor in potentially hostile papers in the run-up to the visit.

But Bill Holtham, who was the founder of a Japanese labour camp survivors group, said Emperor Akihito was the son of a war criminal and it was laughable that he should be receiving an award for chivalry.

Buckingham Palace said that the Order was in the Queen's gift, and that there were historical precedents. "There were a lot of links between the two countries," a spokesman said.

A Foreign Office spokesman said: "The sacrifices and suffering will never be forgotten but they [the veterans] will recognise that there has been a long series of discussions with Japan [on the issue]. The Emperor was a boy when the war took place."

The Emperor's father, Hirohito, was stripped of the Order soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, but had it restored when he visited Britain in 1971 — an occasion on which veterans stood on the streets in silence as his procession passed.

About 12 veterans protested outside the Japanese embassy last week and handed in a letter demanding Japan admits its guilt for "immoral and inhuman" treatment. The group also vowed to continue to push their views in the run-up to Emperor Akihito's visit.

One of the group, Richard Haskell, aged 74, from Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, spent more than three years in four different Japanese camps in Java, and was told he had just two weeks to live before he was liberated by Australian troops. At that time he weighed just 84lbs, and he says he still cannot eat properly because his stomach had shrunk so much.

He said: "The atom bomb saved me. If that had not ended the war when it did I would be dead now."

In Brief

THE British pop star George Michael is facing charges of lewd conduct after being arrested in a men's lavatory in Beverly Hills. The singer, who admitted he was gay in a later television interview, apologised to his fans for his recklessness.

THE mother of Caroline Dickinson, the 13-year-old murdered in France in 1996, brought an unprecedented civil action against the local education authority that organised the holiday.

EUROSTAR will be fined £2,000 for each person carried from Brussels to London without proper travel documents.

AN UNPRECEDENTED number of women and ethnic minority lawyers have won the title of Queen's Counsel in Lord Irvine's first list of those thought to be the most able 10 per cent of the Bar.

TAXPAYERS face a bill totalling nearly £100 million to compensate quota-hopping Spanish boat owners barred from fishing in British waters, following a Court of Appeal ruling.

CHILDREN will be required to have separate passports from October in a move to combat an increase in abductions resulting from broken marriages.

THE National Lottery operator Camelot was told it could continue to do business with the US computer company, G-Tech which sold out its shareholding after its founder and controller, Guy Snowden, was mired by bribery allegations against Virgin boss Richard Branson.

THE NEW and much vaunted tailfin liveries on British Airways jets could be an airport safety hazard, the Civil Aviation Authority warned.

NATIONAL Air Traffic Services was accused by MPs of "astonishing complacency" in delaying the opening of a £339 million centre at Swanwick, Hampshire to ease pressure on air traffic controllers.

RECORDED crime fell by nearly 9 per cent in England and Wales last year — the largest drop in post-war history — but researchers warned it is likely to rise again because continuing economic prosperity and a rise in the number of males aged under 24 will reverse the sharp fall in burglaries and thefts.

SIR Ian MacGregor, the businessman who took on Arthur Scargill's striking miners as chairman of the National Coal Board, has died aged 85.

DOROTHY SQUIRES, a popular singer of the 1940s and 1950s, has died aged 83.

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A blessed Good Friday

THESE men and women did noble work. Tired after 30 hours without sleep, their fatigue from 30 years of war proved greater. In the name of the people of Northern Ireland they reached out to their deadliest rivals — and made peace. It took the deaths of more than 3,000 people, the serious wounding of some 30,000 others, but on Good Friday the two sides of that long and bloody conflict joined together to declare, "Enough".

The Easter snow never let up, the air outside the Castle buildings stayed bitter and frigid — but still Sinn Fein's chairman described it as "a beautiful day". And so it was. Inside the Stormont building, men whose adult lives had been filled with talk of armed struggle and no surrender were now sharing a joke, paying warm tribute to each other. Usually hard-faced men came to speak, only to find a catch in their voice. One delegation was spotted in the middle of the night, its members quietly hugging each other.

The emotion was earned, as was the universal declaration that Stormont had witnessed history in the making. There are important caveats. But no one should lose sight of the scale of the achievement. After three decades of conflict — and an antagonism that has endured for centuries — unionism and nationalism, loyalism and republicanism, Protestants and Catholics may finally have found a way to live together. This is an agreement backed by those who represent the men of violence, standing at opposite extremes. Gerry Adams was smiling, apparently with the blessing of the IRA army council — but so were Gary McMichael and David Ervine, the men who speak for the convicted killers of hardline loyalism. It is as if the Middle East peace process had brought together Hamas and the Jewish settlers of the West Bank: it is an extraordinary feat of diplomacy.

The politicians counselled against euphoria, rightly warning that the task of reconciliation has only just begun. Prudence would suggest waiting a while before handing out plaudits. Even so, it seems right to credit those who pulled off what so many said was impossible. In Northern Ireland, John Hume, Gerry Adams and David Trimble have all earned a place in history. Mr Hume had the courage to stand with Sinn Fein early, encouraging them to choose politics over warfare. Mr Adams led the republican movement away from violence and towards a compromise on its core doctrine of a united Ireland: Sinn Fein has now formally accepted the partition of Ireland — an historic break. Mr Trimble proved the most obstinate negotiator in the last moments, but he showed political strength, too — persuading a party that has made intransigence into an article of faith to compromise. The Ulster Unionists' acceptance of the new ministerial council of the north and south grants the Republic a governmental stake in Northern Ireland for the first time. Until now unionists have regarded the South as an alien, if not enemy, power.

Outside the province, London and Dublin can congratulate themselves. Bertie Ahern buried his mother last week, then headed to Belfast for two sleepless days cajoling and arm-twisting the parties towards an agreement. Tony Blair was pivotal, luring Mr Trimble back to the peace table just when the entire effort seemed doomed. All that was possible thanks to the dogged, indefatigable work of his secretary of state, Mo Mowlam. Her human touch attracted much criticism these last months, but now she is vindicated: she succeeded where every predecessor had failed. Thanks in part to her, Mr Blair has won the prize that had eluded every British PM since Gladstone. It is the crowning achievement of his first year in office.

All the participants were lucky, too, in the choice for chairman. George Mitchell's years of deal-making in the US Senate stood him in good stead, as did the presence of his two largely unsung co-chairs from Canada and Finland. It helped that the trio was backed by an American president who believed in the Northern Ireland peace process before almost anyone else. John Major and Albert Reynolds authored the first framework document that made last week possible.

The deal may be done, but peace is never a done deal. The signatures are just the start. There will be opposition, but the peacemakers must stand firm. There will be challenges from within, too — starting with conflicting interpretations of what the details of the 67-page document all mean. Several of the parties must now have the plan approved by their executives and members. Some unionists might balk at the early release of prisoners; some republicans may recoil at the return of decommissioning. Both sides are bound to find it hard to sit together with old enemies.

Failure is a possibility. But so, now, is success. The people of Northern Ireland at last have an opportunity to live their lives in peace. It is a time for gratitude, and even the odd private prayer. For this was a blessed Good Friday.

Sinn Fein at the crossroads

Malachi O'Doherty explores the dilemma facing republicans

IT IS little wonder that Gerry Adams held back from affirming the deal secured at Stormont Castle on Good Friday. The real marvel was that he did not reject it completely. Republicans were never going to look on the deal, whatever its shape, as a final settlement. It would be, at best, a staging post towards full Irish unification. The question was whether they would try to wreck the deal or work through it.

They have some hard decisions to make. Sinn Fein cannot take the sort of semi-detached attitude it took to earlier agreements. It has to decide whether to oppose it in a referendum or to support it. To support it, it will have to reverse its positions on the consent principle and the Irish constitution. It seems virtually inconceivable that it can do either. Political disgrace awaits Adams if his party makes the wrong decision.

Sinn Fein's vote rose by 15 per cent when it entered the peace process. There were no ceasefires during the elections, yet more nationalists than ever before flocked to the party. Those votes were urging Sinn Fein to make peace. Now the process is over, it must either meet those expectations or lose those votes to the SDLP.

Adams may calculate that many nationalists will be sceptical of the assembly, and campaign against it, but the assembly is now locked into the cross-border bodies. Crashing the assembly, either by abstention or by disorder on the streets, would also crash the cross-border Council of Ministers. It is easy to see how this could be done, but few nationalists would thank republicans for doing it.

Electoral dangers compel Sinn Fein, in the short term, to compete peacefully against the SDLP or further jeopardise its vote. Yet the IRA has never before held a ceasefire through an election period. To increase its vote while the "armed struggle" is on is always a bonus.

A truly cynical but perfectly plausible reading of the IRA's decision to end its ceasefire in 1996 with the Canary Wharf bomb would go like this: Sinn Fein was being coaxed into an electoral pact with the SDLP; on a proportional sharing of the seats in nationalist areas it could only at most have got two MPs, and probably only one; the bomb made the pact impossible, and Sinn Fein went on to get two seats. This time there seems little opportunity to use violence so creatively.

Some republicans are wondering how they got into this mess. It was not the underlying principles of the peace process that raised their hopes and kept them involved. They were always aware of the limitations of the process. But their hopes rested on the support of the SDLP, the Irish government and President Bill Clinton, and the faith that they would push the process beyond its obvious limitations.

Such a last-minute squeeze on the unionists seemed to be working to republican advantage in the last days of the talks, but the final agreement falls short of republican hopes.

The republicans' allies have bought the new agreement and expect republicans to buy it too. If they reject it, and produce more violence to show evidence, the way they do, that the causes of violence are still in place, they will not find the same understanding of their murderous reflexes as they have been shown until now.

Only two weeks ago republicans seemed to believe that they were well on their way to success. They believed that there was a new nationalism in place which could barter for far greater change than was to be attained.

Their optimism was out of kilter with the mood of their people. Former Sinn Fein councillor Martin O'Muilleoir expressed despondency in his column in the Andersonstown News: "The bottom line for new nationalists is that the Council of the Piles *(sic)* is out; the sell-out on Articles Two and Three is out; and the new Stormont Assembly is out. The sooner [Irish Prime Minister] Bertie Ahern understands those bald facts, the sooner we can get down to discussing a sensible arrangement."

Minimal expectations of the new nationalism were that Articles Two and Three would remain intact and that Northerners would have the right to elect members to the Irish Parliament, the Dail. The agreement would have to be understood to have the potential to evolve towards Irish unity, and the SDLP would have to stay with the "new nationalism".

Only a few days after these depressive assessments, Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness offered his own evaluation of the tactics of the Irish prime minister. He said Ahern was "playing a blinder".

The gap between the positions of O'Muilleoir and McGuinness is both narrow and vast. McGuinness clearly thought that there was a small step forward within reach that would lay the old struggle to rest and offer a political way forward.

Adams always had what some loyalists have described as "the luxury of dissent", because sufficient consensus was available without him. But he knows now that the peace process is over. The Hume-Adams project has completed itself and republicans are on their own.

Unionists must swallow hard

Henry Patterson on the gamble taken by David Trimble

SIR Oliver Napier of the Alliance party served as a minister in the power-sharing government that was agreed at Sunningdale and destroyed by the loyalist Ulster Workers' Council strike in 1974. As the deadline for a peace deal approached, he was asked to describe the difference between then and now. His answer was that those who had been on the outside in 1974, bitterly attacking the new administration, were now sitting down with him trying to bring the peace process to a successful conclusion.

However, while it is true that those who used violence to destroy the frail peace in 1974 are now proponents of a historic compromise between unionism and nationalism, a significant sector of the loyalist community will be hostile to the agreement. The statement by a former Irish government adviser that an agreement which did not include Sinn Fein was "not worth a penny candle" has become a mantra for many Irish nationalists. Yet David Trimble's task of selling his party an agreement that Gerry Adams could live with will be a formidable one.

The deep-rooted communalism of Ulster encourages a view of politics as a zero-sum struggle in which a gain for the "other side" is inevitably conceived as a loss for one's own. Since its formation, unionism has been driven by tension between the need to accommodate the interests of the British state in Ireland and a parochial assertion of the Ulster majority's right to run the province as it thinks best.

But the decline in the strength of unionism since the sixties has encouraged a rethinking of unionist strategy. The key development is on the North-South dimension of any settlement. Until recently, unionists proposed a "good neighbours" model of relations with the South, in which a new government in the North would work out "practical" forms of co-operation with Dublin.

Anything more was rejected as a form of creeping all-Ireland integration. A compromise has been made possible by a unionist shift towards acceptance of a North-South council that, although established by legislation in the Dail and Westminster, will be accountable to the assembly.

It was the Council of Ireland provisions of the Sunningdale Agreement that proved fatal, so what is there to prevent history repeating itself? First, there can be no denying the low-key nature of the areas in which the council will operate: animal health and environmental protection, for example, are not the sort of thing to send loyalists to the barricades.

Second, there is Dublin's decision to amend the Irish constitution to remove the territorial claim on the North. This decisive break has provided unionism with an agreement which will signify the acceptance by nationalists of the legitimacy of Northern Ireland.

For Trimble, some institutional expression of the national identity of Northern Ireland's Catholic minority in the form of North-South institutions is a price worth paying for a settlement that leaves Northern Ireland firmly within the Union and for the first time with the acceptance and participation of nationalists.

It is this aspect of the agreement that has caused so much discomfort for Sinn Fein. Under Adams's leadership, the party has moved far beyond what the more fundamentalist elements of the republican movement can live with. Adams, who had given up the idea that armed struggle could win Irish unity, still relied on unionist obduracy to bring the talks to a standstill, thus further alienating the Northern majority from the rest of the United Kingdom and forcing a radical shift in government policy towards joint authority.

The document produced by George Mitchell appeared briefly to be contributing to such a scenario. However, the swift and decisive rejection of it by Trimble, and the consequent intense involvement of Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern, yielded a final agreement that threatens to severely disrupt the republican movement.

Although there is no real basis in the agreement for it to be depicted as "transitional" to a united Ireland, Sinn Fein will use all its formidable tactical skills to present it as such — and realises that other parts of the agreement could create real problems for Trimble in his struggle to sell it to his party. Adams will need to risk a major internal debate to get authority to allow Sinn Fein members elected to the new assembly to take their seats. But he knows that the possibility of having to sit in a Cabinet with republicans would cause revulsion in the unionist grass roots.

Together with the proposals for reform of the RUC and for prisoner releases, this will be unpalatable to many ordinary members of the Unionist party, who will be exploited in the rejectionist campaign promised by the Rev Ian Paisley and Bob McCartney. Nevertheless Trimble's trump card will be the argument that the party most likely to be damaged by the agreement is Sinn Fein, which faces political isolation if it rejects it and major internal convulsions if it does not.

In the zero-sum world of Ulster politics, this may be enough to save Trimble from the fate of Brian Faulkner, the Unionist leader destroyed by Sunningdale.

Le Monde

Chirac and Jospin push for reform

Olivier Biffaud

WHAT has been called the "modernisation" — it is more a case of reform — of the French political system under the stewardship of the power-sharing president, Jacques Chirac, and the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, got off to a flying start on April 8: the cabinet approved two bills, drawn up by interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, that will drastically restrict political "multi-jobbing".

In concrete terms this will mean that no elected representative will be allowed to hold more than two posts at the same time. Someone who is a member of parliament may not at the same time be president of a region or *département*, or mayor of a city, town or village, though he or she may be a councillor at local or regional level.

The government's three-point plan aims to bring about "a more demanding commitment to public service", at the same time as "an increased participation by women in political office" and "a clarification of respective responsibilities within each institution".

The restriction of multi-jobbing was the first plank of Chirac's blueprint for modernising the political system after last month's regional elections had demonstrated the degree of leverage the far-right National Front (FN) could exert on the mainstream right. It is also something that was consistently advocated by Jospin during the presidential campaign of 1995 and by the Socialist party (PS) in 1996.

As soon as he became prime minister last year, Jospin reiterated his views on the issue in his general policy statement of June 19. He stressed that a restriction of multi-jobbing was something that had not only become "a priority" for political leaders, but was in tune with public opinion.

During the president's traditional July 14 television interview, Chirac made it clear that he shared Jospin's view and that his stance on the multi-jobbing issue was firm. He said he favoured "limitation, and even restriction to a single office, on condition the matter was thoroughly debated in parliament".

By November 20, when he addressed the conference of the Association of French Mayors, Chirac had shifted his ground slightly: he hoped that "those women and men who have the weighty responsibility of drawing up the law are not cut off from the realities of life on the ground".

Meanwhile Jospin had begun a series of consultations with representatives of all the political parties except the FN, with the aim of finding out what they thought of multi-jobbing. It is such a complex issue that differences of opinion do not exactly follow the dividing line between right and left. There are people for and against multi-jobbing in every political party.

Jospin was initially tempted to get parliament to approve at least a first reading of the planned new legislation before last month's regional and cantonal elections. But in the end he decided not to rush things. A minority of deputies belonging to the Socialist group tried to put pressure on Jospin, but to no avail. The prime minister decided to heed the arguments of one of his advisers, Gérard Le Gall, who had urged him to take his time.

On February 11 Jospin sent his proposals to the party leaders he had consulted. Presented as "balanced solutions" designed to make the democratic system "more efficient and closer to the people", they have been included in the two bills that Jospin hopes will receive a first reading by June 30, when parliament goes into summer recess.

A third bill — of a constitutional nature, since it involves barring government ministers from holding executive office in local assemblies — has yet to be drawn up. It will require a change in the fundamental law, as indeed will the introduction of "equal access" for men and women to political, professional and social positions of responsibility; and it appears to constitute the only bone of contention between the president and the prime minister.

Under the terms of the first bill approved by the cabinet it will no longer be possible for anyone elected to the office of deputy or senator also to be a member of the European Parliament (MEP). A deputy or a senator will not be allowed to hold an executive position at local government level or occupy more than one post as a (non-executive) councillor on top of his or her job in parliament or the senate.

The second bill states that no one may hold more than two non-executive posts at local level (as a regional, general, municipal, Corsican or Paris councillor), and no one may hold more than one executive post at that level. People who are already MEPs may not hold any of these posts either, nor may they hold more than one non-executive post.

The presidency of intercommunal structures and the posts of deputy president or deputy mayor in local assemblies are not covered by the provisions of the bill.

The prime minister's office has indicated that it is now up to members of parliament to propose the number of amendments they see fit. Whatever happens, the Socialists have no intention of spearheading the reform, which is something they could easily have done.

(April 9)

Chirac on a visit to Bosnia last week. At home the president has made common cause with the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, on the issue of political 'multi-jobbing' PHOTOGRAPH: ALMIR ARNAULT

No answers to burning questions

EDITORIAL

"THE fire's been waiting to break out for 30 years," quipped a member of the National Amazonia Research Institute. He was referring sarcastically to the fires that have ravaged the forests of Roraima state, in northwestern Brazil, on a scale never seen before in the region.

The fires have not been due to El Niño or any other unavoidable quirk of nature — they are a colossal ecological disaster whose cause is primarily political. Far from being inevitable, it was the result of a resettlement policy that was first implemented at the beginning of the seventies by Brazil's military dictatorship.

The fires spread as a result of the slash-and-burn technique used by settlers on recently cleared land, with little or no regard for the most elementary precautions.

Claiming to offer "land without people to people without land" — a slap in the face for the indigenous tribes that had been living there for centuries — the succession of generals who occupied the post of president in Brasilia thought they could bypass a genuine process of agrarian reform by taking the destitute inhabitants of the feudal, semi-arid Nordeste and resettling them in the Amazon region.

The policy of populating Brazil's northern territories also served one of the regime's major geopolitical priorities, the National Integration Plan, whose aim was to thwart foreign powers' alleged designs on the region.

The result of the massive transfer of ill-prepared migrants was that their poverty was transported with them to the newly settled areas. Forced to keep on destroying more and more forest, because a cleared area can, at best, produce crops for a period of only two years, the farmers were the principal victims of a perverse policy.

And that policy has not been modified in the slightest since the re-establishment of democracy in Brazil. Amazonia continues to act as a "safety valve" for social tensions generated by an iniquitous distribution of land in the rest of the country.

In the past three years 47,220sq km of forest has been wiped off the map. Asian timber companies, despite their illegal operations — including the extraction of tropical hardwood from "protected" Indian reserves — and despite being universally denounced by non-governmental organisations, are continuing to descend into Amazonia on a massive scale. And they are doing so with the blessing of the government.

Unless something is done, the plundering and burning will continue — a situation that is nothing short of an ecological crime.

(April 5-6)

Gloom dampens Ecuador election campaign

Nicole Bonnet in Lima

THE twin campaigns for Ecuador's presidential and general elections, scheduled to take place in less than two months, have just begun against a backdrop of economic gloom. The kickoff came on March 30, with the official registration of the eight contenders for the presidency. The first round of the presidential election will take place on May 31.

Ecuador's 7 million voters are smarting not only from a succession of natural disasters triggered by El Niño, but from the serious economic and social repercussions of the plummeting price of oil, the main source of foreign currency.

Voters, who have been asked to go to the polls four times in the past two years, make no secret of the fact that they are fed up with the unpredictability that has recently characterised Ecuadorian politics.

In 1996 they elected as president the populist Abdala Bucaram, whose nickname was El Loco. Six months later, following mass demonstrations against his economic policies, the Ecuadorian Congress, plainly exceeding its powers, eased him out of office on the grounds that he was suffering from a "mental disability".

As a result Ecuador found itself with three heads of state for a period of 72 hours. While Bucaram fled to his home town of Guayaquil on the coast, before eventually going into exile, vice-president Rosalia Arteaga claimed she was entitled to step into his shoes, but then stepped aside in favour of the president of the Congress, Fabian Alarcon, who had the support of the military.

A referendum held three months later confirmed Alarcon's position as a caretaker president, for want of a more satisfactory solution. Then came the election of a Constituent Assembly.

Today populist leaders of every political hue are seeking the favours of the electorate. According to the latest opinion poll, carried out at the end of March by the Market Institute, the man currently in the lead, with 32 per cent of the electorate intending to vote for him, is Jamil Mahuad of the People's Democracy party. He is currently mayor of the capital, Quito.

Mahuad has the support of the conservative Social-Christian party of Leon Febres Cordero (president from 1984-88), which is not putting forward its own candidate.

Bucaram, who until last month said he would be joining the presidential race, has now decided to stay in exile in Panama. Following accusations that he misappropriated funds, he risks imprisonment if he returns to Ecuador.

It seems unlikely that any of the candidates will win an outright majority in the first round of the election, in which case the new president will be elected in the second round on July 12.

The international financial community is keeping a close and anxious eye on political developments in Ecuador because the economic situation there seems to be on the brink of chaos. Alarcon has not taken any steps to curb inflation, which now stands at more than 25 per cent, or to close a yawning budget deficit. And no structural reforms aimed at modernising the country have been implemented.

The cost of damage caused by El Niño (estimated at \$1.2 billion), compounded by the collapse of oil prices, has sent the budget deficit soaring from \$500 million to \$1.3 billion. "Unless we take steps to rein in that deficit, inflation will rise to 100 per cent," says Danilo Carrera, who is in charge of Ecuador's monetary policy.

To reduce the deficit the government put before parliament a proposal to increase value added tax by 40 per cent, but this was rejected. In turn the monetary authorities asked Alarcon to devalue the Ecuadorian currency, the sucre, by 7.5 per cent. When the president refused, they resigned.

(April 5-6)

Writing a new chapter in her life

Mazarine Pingeot, François Mitterrand's daughter, talks to **Josyane Savigneau** about her literary debut

MAZARINE PINGEOT is a highly intelligent, dynamic and sensitive 23-year-old. She says: "I always saw myself as someone who would write one day. Like a lot of people I started writing short pieces at about the age of 10. But I stopped during the years I was preparing for the Ecole Normale Supérieure."

Pingeot came fourth in the competitive final exam at the prestigious teachers' training college, and is now a philosophy teacher.

Did she ever have doubts about her vocation as a writer? "Yes, when I was about 17. But to me writing is the best way of existing, of justifying one's existence." Luckily there is true grit behind her shyness: the problem facing Pingeot, the love-child of François Mitterrand, was how to gain recognition as a writer after suffering serious overexposure in the media.

Whatever the quality of the book, she knew that she could get it published, but that it would be for the wrong reasons. "Now they're going to get at me again for things that are not of my doing. But maybe it'll all be over by the time I write my fifth book. It was important that I should start early in order to cut short what was being constructed around me.

"I wanted to reappropriate my Christian name, my image and my life. I thought of using a pseudonym, then I gave up the idea. I'm not trying to give myself an image, but to recover my existing one. I'm beginning my own life. People have always come down on me like a ton of bricks without my doing anything. At least now they'll be able to do so for a reason."

The "reason" is her book, Premier Roman (First Novel), published by Julliard this month. The novel has ambitions that are rare nowadays in first novels: it has a complex narrative structure with a multitude of characters and a variety of different points of view, places and situations.



Pingeot comforted by her mother at Mitterrand's funeral in 1996. With her first novel she aims to move on from her media image and to 'reappropriate' her life PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPE WOJAZER

Premier Roman is about young people starting out in life — "Many children from bourgeois families, but also many young second-generation immigrants, *petits bourgeois* from the provinces and well-educated kids from the 5th and 6th *arrondissements* [in Paris], heirs to a narcissistic élite moving within arbitrary boundaries set by a particular episode in the history of intellectual Paris, with its own brand of exaggerated snobbery and self-indulgence. Agathe was one of them . . . One of her ambitions was to escape from that cramped milieu."

The novel's epigraph consists of lines from Louis Aragon's poem, "La Beauté du Diable", which begins: "Young people, time is ahead of you like an escaped horse." The two central characters, Agathe and Victor, have been having an affair for some time. They believe their mutual fidelity should be "profound, total and flexible".

Agathe, a hard-working student at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, is "rather frivolous, generally pleasure-loving, and both sensual and intelligent". She likes to be alone, but also loves parties and fine wine.

Victor, who has been writing since the age of 12, forces himself to turn out five pages a day. "He had recently gone over from piles of loose pages to a word processor . . . The rhythm of his sentences changed as a result. He had to control his style more strictly in an attempt to achieve the perfection to which he aspired — he had enjoyed reading good books from an early age."

"My novel is not autobiographical," Pingeot says, "but the subject matter is naturally drawn from what I know, have seen and, in some cases, experienced. I didn't draw up a plan, but just started writing. I told myself I wanted to develop certain themes. But I soon realised that a novel is not a demonstration or a theoretical treatise illustrated by characters. It has its own autonomy. That's something you discover as you go along. That's what needs to be worked on."

Pingeot's first novel, probably because of its ambitiousness, feels a little too well worked out. It puts one in mind of Simone de Beauvoir's Mémoires D'Une Jeune Fille Rangée — which is of course a compliment. It is the Beauvoir book with which Pingeot says she feels the greatest affinity. "Later on in her memoirs she becomes tougher and more rigid, and her humourlessness worries me. But when you read Beauvoir, when you see what she has to say about freedom, you can measure the degree to which the situation has declined since."

It is encouraging that a 23-year-old should say that she wants to base her thinking and her desire to write on "the idea that one can at any time create one's own life, and that one is entitled, if not to do anything, then to invent anything", and that she should venture to write such a meaty, if self-conscious, book.

While older women writers seem concerned, in their increasingly slender tomes, with husbands and families, Pingeot tells the story of a woman who thinks that "a sense of guilt is the worst sin", and who wonders "how it is possible to live several lives at the same time and remain true to oneself".

That may be a naive question, but which women novelists ask it nowadays? Who wants to live several lives that do not centre on "my husband"? Pingeot's book at least has the merit of reviving the debate.

The other writer who haunts the pages of Premier Roman is Marguerite Yourcenar — and not just because Pingeot pays her an indirect tribute by calling one of her characters Hadrien, a young, elegant and rather vulnerable man whom Agathe saves from a "castrating, fanatical" mother, and who comes to live with her.

Premier Roman is dedicated to "my father". The father in the novel, although he does not play a prominent role, is immensely important to Agathe. He loves his daughter "more than moderately", while leading his own life.

Pingeot is probably not familiar enough with Yourcenar's life to realise that the relationship between Agathe and her father, "elderly, to be sure but, in his political and moral reflections, the youngest man she had ever known", is incredibly similar to that between Yourcenar and her father, Michel de Crayencour.

Could it just be the father's age — in both cases much greater than the daughter's — that creates the parallel? Probably not. Like Yourcenar (and, probably, like Pingeot), Agathe says her relationship with her father is one of "apprenticeship", not submission. "Her father had guided her in her choice of books to read, her literary preferences. Yet he had never suggested to her that she study philosophy. That was her choice, and it set her apart from him without causing any rift."

The father in Premier Roman, who is a publisher, wants his daughter to be free and, with a mixture of pride and anxiety, follows her passion for show-jumping. He, like Crayencour, is "not much of a father" in the narrow sense of the word. He seldom talks about his life, and does not try to be chummy.

"Father and daughter formed an unassailable pair, who could terrify both strangers and members of the family. They did not need to express their complicity; silence was enough."

One hopes that Pingeot fulfils, with the same force and freedom as Yourcenar, the "father's dream" that she should become a memorable writer.

(April 3)

Musical adventures of a septuagenarian

Stockhausen, 70 this year, tells **Pierre Gervasoni** of the problems facing an avant-garde composer

YOU are shortly due to complete a unique project you've been working on since 1977 — Licht (Light), an opera built around the seven days of the week. What first motivated you to work on it?

Before starting Licht, I spent three years composing Sirius, a work based on the four seasons of the year, the 12 months and the 12 signs of the Zodiac. With Licht I became interested in the week, and I'm thinking of tackling Der Tag [The Day] later on, which will be a 24-hour cycle. I'm attracted by cosmic rhythms and cycles connected with the movements of the planets and stars.

Another major project of yours over the past few years has been the production of recordings of your works, which are now issued by your own company. What prompted you to set up Stockhausen-Verlag?

I did more than 100 records for Deutsche Grammophon and many other recording companies. But in 1984 the marketing directors of the major firms said they could no longer go on producing my works as they had in the past. I'd designed maquettes, written texts and done sound mixing — all for nothing.

Yet you were the composer . . .

The only living composer who wasn't losing them money! That wasn't enough for their new profitability targets. Yet Gesang Der Jünglinge [Song Of The Adolescents] sold 130,000 copies. All my records were gradually withdrawn from the catalogue. So in 1991 I thought I'd produce one or two discs myself, just to see. We now have more than 70 in the catalogue.

Do you sell a lot of them?

No. CD No 3, which is devoted to electronic music such as Gesang Der Jünglinge and Kontakte, is the most in demand. We sell about 150 a year. Then comes Gruppen, with about 100 a year. But no matter: the aim isn't to get rich, but to ensure that the works remain available.

It has been claimed that, for similar reasons, you photocopied all your scores so they could be preserved in fallout shelters all over the world.

That's not really true. Photocopies of the rough drafts of my first 13 works were sold — for the cost of the photocopies — to nine international institutions, such as New York university and the Sacher Institute in Basel. Stockhausen doesn't have the cash to build fallout shelters. It's probably someone's repressed wish.

It has to be said that your ideas sometimes lay themselves open to overreaction by commentators — particularly when you use four helicopters in a musical work.

It all came from a dream I had. The Salzburg Festival commissioned a string quartet from me. I shall never write one, just as I've never written a symphony or a concerto, because I think that form equals content, that content equals material, and that material equals form.

Then I had this dream of four musicians who were playing in helicopters; I thought it was an interesting possibility and began to think about how it might be carried out. I went to the studio a few days later and, through a large window on the fourth floor, saw four helicopters wheeling around the building.

This encouraged me to pursue the idea of making the dream come true. I managed to do so, after much difficulty, in the Netherlands in 1995. It forms the third scene of Wednesday, in Licht. It will be performed in Leipzig as part of the 1999 Saxony Art Festival. Sometimes one's life takes a new turn.

Your life seems to be heading towards a certain isolation. Is that something you sought deliberately?

Absolutely not. I've spent more than half my life copying out orchestral parts. I've written 32 works for orchestra and they are almost never performed. In any case the orchestra will have to evolve. One doesn't need 16 first violins playing the same notes — which is what you get nowadays in big concert halls.

In the middle of a modern orchestra I place three synthesisers, which produce 1,000 times as many different kinds of timbre as a whole traditional orchestra could do.

You do a lot of your work in the studio. Is that where composers will be working in future?

The studio suits electronic music, but I find live music just as important. So I spend half my time working with ensembles and preparing public performances. The composer of the future must, as in the past, be the architect of his own work and prove that he is not only a musician, but also a veritable technician.

(March 22-23)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Big Tobacco Firms Pull Out of Deal

John Schwartz

THE NATION'S major tobacco companies last week announced that they were abandoning their efforts to shape federal tobacco legislation and vowed instead to fight bills that they said would bankrupt them.

Saying that tobacco politics is "broken beyond repair," RJR Nabisco Chief Executive Officer Steven F. Goldstone said, "There is no process which is even remotely likely to lead to an acceptable comprehensive solution this year." The other leading tobacco companies immediately followed with similar statements.

The announcements appear to mark the end of a nearly year-long strategy by the historically defiant industry to take a conciliatory path by working with Congress and the White House to reach a national tobacco settlement. After months of negotiations, the leading bill to emerge in Congress calls for the industry to pay $516 billion — much more than it had agreed to pay in a deal announced last June — while providing far less legal protection than it had sought.

"Washington," Goldstone said, "has rushed to collect more tobacco revenues while playing the politics of punishment."

For the most part, President Clinton and members of Congress said that they would proceed toward comprehensive tobacco legislation without the industry's cooperation. "I'm very disappointed," Clinton said. "I have been working for two years on this and I don't intend to stop now," he added.

Clinton said the companies may have made a political miscalculation in their struggle for survival. "I hope they will reconsider because I am determined to get this done this year," he said. "I don't think this is the time for threats by anybody."

His top health adviser, Bruce Reed, was even more blunt about the escalating tensions around efforts to pass America's first anti-smoking policy. Smiling, the mild-mannered Reed said: "We're at war."

The tough talk was echoed on Capitol Hill, where lawmakers from both parties vowed to pass legislation this year designed to reduce smoking by young people with or without the tobacco industry's cooperation.

"It is unfortunate that the tobacco industry has decided to walk away from negotiations before Congress has completed consideration of national tobacco legislation, but their reluctance to cooperate will have little, if any, effect on congressional action," said Rep. Deborah Pryce, R-Ohio, whom House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Georgia, picked to oversee House GOP tobacco strategy. "Children are the real issue here, not tobacco companies."

Sen. Kent Conrad, D-North Dakota, who heads the Senate Democratic working group on tobacco issues, was scornful of the tobacco companies' move. "Poor babies," he said. "We don't need their blessing to pass tough tobacco legislation. In many ways this is liberating — do it right, and not try to dance around their approval. They weren't going to approve of anything that was any good anyway."

Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, who sponsored the leading bill on Capital Hill, said Congress must go forward "with or without the industry's support," adding that "we could never be placed in a position where the terms of this agreement are dictated."

An ally of the industry, however, Sen. Wendell H. Ford, D-Kentucky, said he understood the "frustration shared by tobacco companies."

In his speech last week at the National Press Club, Goldstone blamed the president for showing "precious little" leadership on the issue, and anti-tobacco activists for taking a proposal "which should have been a public health advocate's dream come true" and promoting instead "a surprising new public agenda — the need to promote litigation and punitive damages against this industry."

In the original proposal, the industry agreed to pay $368 billion and accept broad new restrictions on its advertising and marketing activities to try to reduce youth smoking in exchange for protections against major lawsuits. Today, Goldstone said, he had "no hope whatsoever" of getting that agreement.

"Why did this political process break down?" he asked. "My answer is one word — money." The prospect of billions in new tax revenue from the politically unpopular industry, paid for by smokers, drove the political process beyond rational bounds, he said. The White House, as well as Democrats and Republicans in Congress, had already begun to plan for how they would spend money from a tobacco settlement. McCain, Goldstone said, excluded the industry from negotiations over the bill.

Goldstone acknowledged that the tobacco companies shared some of the blame. "The industry did not fully appreciate the depth of the mistrust and anger that existed about the industry's past controversies," he said.

Now, he said, the industry would devote its energies and money to fighting the McCain bill, by taking its case to the public. The industry's public relations campaign began last week with advertisements in leading newspapers reading, "We agreed to change the way we do business . . . not to go out of business."

The industry also planned, Goldstone said, to return to a combative stance in courtrooms across the nation. The industry, which faces an onslaught of lawsuits around the country, had agreed in the past year to pay billions of dollars to several of the states that had sued to recover the costs of paying for the health care of sick smokers.





Yeltsin Puts Pressure On Latvia

David Hoffman in Moscow

A SIMMERING dispute over the treatment of ethnic Russians in Latvia intensified last week as President Boris Yeltsin threatened to take economic reprisals against Riga, such as rerouting Russian oil exports away from the Baltic state.

After a month of rhetorical jousting between Russia and Latvia, Yeltsin for the first time endorsed calls by Russian politicians to tighten the economic noose around Latvia in retaliation for the treatment of Russians there.

Presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky told the Interfax news service that Yeltsin supports targeted measures against Latvian goods that were proposed by Russian regional leaders, including Mayor Yuri Luzhkov of Moscow. Yastrzhembsky said that these measures would stop short of official sanctions.

The dispute was triggered by an incident in Riga on March 3, when several thousand Russian speakers held a demonstration to protest higher residential fees and demand that Latvia continue to recognize their Soviet-era passports. Latvia, which became independent in 1991, has imposed stiff citizenship requirements, including language-proficiency tests. About 700,000 people, or one-third of the Latvian population, are Russian-speaking.

Police dispersed the rally with force. The incident unleashed a torrent of criticism from Russian politicians. On March 31, Luzhkov accused Latvia of "genocide" and has led a campaign to impose economic sanctions. The Kremlin has said economic measures were being studied.

Last week, Yastrzhembsky said that Yeltsin had ordered the government to "pay the most serious attention to the possibility of diversifying the routes of Russian oil exports" away from Latvia.

Latvia could be hurt severely by Russian sanctions. Latvian officials have said Russia is its biggest trade partner. In 1997 Russia accounted for 21 percent of Latvia's $1.65 billion in exports and 15.6 percent of the $2.7 billion in imports.

An Irish Triumph

EDITORIAL

GIVEN how long the principals have been engaged in dispute, there is no dishonor in missing by just a few hours the agreed deadline for peace in Northern Ireland. The very idea of a deadline — on the eve of Easter, no less — that if not met would generate ominous consequences was a negotiating artifice. But a useful one. The agreement announced last week richly merits its designation as historic. It gives its signers the opportunity to bring together, in British-ruled Northern Ireland, rival Protestant and Catholic communities that have distrusted each other, often to murderous effect, for nearly three decades.

Maturity and courage and the horror of more than 3,000 killings underlie the accord. It took the example of many individuals from both communities to build a constituency first for negotiations and then, over the past 22 months, for agreement. The polls consistently showed more support for the process than did the wary politicians. But the leaders of Britain and Ireland and the participating representatives of Northern Ireland kept at their mission. President Clinton identified strongly with the talks. His man, George Mitchell, performed prodigies of mediation.

At the table, the challenge was to preserve Northern Ireland's old political tie to Britain, as the Protestant majority insisted, even while building a new tie to Ireland, as the Catholic minority insisted. The task was done by creating a power-sharing assembly within Northern Ireland and cross-border bodies to forge co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Both Catholic and Protestant leaders nearly gagged on the terms; so too may some of their constituents in the referendums and elections soon to come.

The Protestants are yielding a privileged status quo and now must accept a taxing degree of change and uncertainty, especially as to the future British connection. The Catholics must see to the early and verified disarming of the IRA, and learn to live with a conditioned hope, not an unconditional promise, of a united Ireland. These considerations put grave responsibilities on the people of Northern Ireland to exchange violence for a new political culture. They deserve respect and encouragement as they take up their new burdens.

41 Killed in Tornadoes

RESCUE workers sifting through debris in search of survivors and victims' bodies moved across fields of devastation last week in what had been comfortable suburban neighborhoods that were wrecked by a series of tornadoes sweeping across the South, *write Donald P. Baker and Edward Walsh in Birmingham.*

Emergency officials said that at least 41 people were killed and hundreds of homes were damaged or destroyed.

The storm that carried in the tornadoes brushed Mississippi and crashed violently through central Alabama before moving northeast into Georgia and over the Carolinas toward the Atlantic. Officials said it left in its wake 32 dead in Alabama, at least eight in Georgia and one in Mississippi. They warned that the toll could rise as emergency teams searched the wreckage.

The winds struck with such intensity around here that they "sounded like the thunder of a Winston Cup" stock car race, according to Debbie Blackburn, who survived by huddling in a hallway with fellow church members in a suburb of Birmingham, Alabama's largest city.

All around the hilltop church, cars were strewn like toys. Treetops were cluttered with shards of clothing. Within sight of the church, across a small valley in the McDonald's Chapel neighborhood of nearby Rock Creek, entire houses were fused together along a street where, officials said, 10 people had died.

President Clinton declared portions of Alabama and Georgia major disaster areas, making residents eligible for federal assistance, including housing, low-cost loans and aid to local governments.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY April 19 1998

'Jerusalem Will Never Be Redivided'

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu talks to **Lally Weymouth** about his hopes for peace

I've heard that you and U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross have discussed a new proposal: Allowing the Palestinians to build in certain Israeli-held areas near the Jordan Valley.

We're discussing a number of possibilities to bridge the gaps, but we haven't made any final determination. I think Ross saw a serious effort on the part of the Israeli government. There are two principles we believe are essential for peace. One is that the Palestinians fulfill the promises they gave us to fight terrorism and annul their covenant, and the second is that the U.S. recognize the need for Israel to determine its security needs and hence the area from which it will withdraw.

What is your vision of peace with the Palestinians?

My vision is that at the end of the final settlement, the Palestinians will be able to have their own territory and the ability to govern themselves inside that territory but [with] none of the powers that could threaten Israel.

In other words, they won't be able to have a defense capability?

They would be able to have local law and order capabilities, but they shouldn't be able to field a large army or to import weapons that could effectively neutralize Israel's defenses.

So, there will be no Palestinian state?

My opposition to the word "statehood" is because it tends to encompass those unlimited powers that could threaten Israel. I have no problem with the Palestinians running their own lives. Therefore, I envision a final settlement which is a balance of the Palestinians' need to run their own affairs and our need to protect Israel's security. I believe that this government can strike a balance and deliver an agreement which the overwhelming majority of Israelis can stand by.

Your right-wing supporters oppose a deal that would hand over land to the Palestinians.

I made it very clear that if [Palestinian leader Yasser] Arafat and the Palestinian Authority keep their side of the bargain, we'll keep our side.

Your relationship with the Clinton administration does not appear to be successful. Why?

It's had its difficult moments. Over the years we've had divided views between American presidents and Israeli prime ministers on Israel's security needs. We had Eisenhower and Ben-Gurion differing on the Sinai; Ford differing with Rabin during the reassessment in 1975; Reagan and Begin clashing over Lebanon.

Do you and President Clinton have a fundamental difference?

In comparison to those disagreements, this is . . . a milder case.

Is it true that the Palestinians only arrest terrorists when Israel presents them with intelligence?

They only act on a specific tip that we give them. For example, if we say that terrorist X, living on street Y in city Z, is about to launch a terrorist act against Israel, they'll pick him up. But they don't do systematic sweeps [and] interrogations. They're not making the difficult choice, which Egypt and Jordan have made. The choice is whom do you want to make peace with — Israel or the terrorists? It's one or the other, but not both.

Do you have a vision of living in peace one day with the Palestinians?

Yes, I do . . . not one day, [but] soon. If Arafat accepts my offer to negotiate a permanent settlement, we could have a historic breakthrough with the one government that can deliver. I hope it happens during this term.

What happens if Arafat unilaterally declares a Palestinian state on May 4, 1999, the original deadline for a permanent status agreement?

I wouldn't recommend unilateral action. Palestinian unilateral actions always run the risk of unilateral Israeli actions . . . Israel cannot be thrown back to the indefensible '67 boundaries and Jerusalem will never be redivided.

Do you have any hope of a treaty with Syria?

Yes, I do. If Syria is less rigid about the conditions for restarting the negotiations. In any case we have decided that after 20 years of our stay in Lebanon, our objective is to withdraw once we have the necessary security arrangements.

Turning to Israel's celebration of its 50th anniversary . . .

. . . You never had worse odds for a people than the Jewish people had 50 years ago when we were at the abyss of death and destruction, when it seemed like you could never mobilize our will to live again. Yet within a very short time we established our independence in our ancient land, reunited our capital, revived an ancient language and produced one of the most advanced technological economies in the world.

We have begun to complete a circle of peace, first with Egypt and Jordan and soon, I believe, with the Palestinians and the Syrians and the Lebanese. I think this is more than the founding fathers of Israel could have imagined 50 years ago.



Netanyahu . . .'Fifty years ago we were at the abyss of death . . . I think this is more than the founding fathers could have wished for'

Japan P.M. Unveils Plan For Economy

Sandra Sugawara in Tokyo

BOWING to pressure from foreign leaders, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto unveiled last week a plan to cut income taxes by $30 billion over the next two years, a step economists hope will stop Japan's slide into recession.

Hashimoto said Japan's economy was in "quite a serious state" and needed new stimulus. His move reverses a long policy that Japan could not have new tax cuts, so as to keep its budget deficit under control.

Stopping a recession in Japan is emerging as a central goal in international efforts against the financial crisis that is shaking much of East Asia. If Japan can get its economy moving by giving citizens more spending money, billions of dollars of imports would be drawn in from all over the region, helping other Asian countries recover.

U.S. ambassador to Japan Thomas Foley called the stimulus package "very encouraging" and "a bold action." The U.S. has led a rising chorus of the International Commitee clamoring for tax cuts to revive economic growth in Japan, the world's second-largest economy.

In Washington, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin gave a more guarded response. He "welcomed" the step, adding that "what is crucial is that Japan move quickly to put in place a strong program."

Hashimoto's handling of the economy has sent his popularity rating plummeting, but analysts said his performance last week may turn that around. "Mr. Hashimoto made his breakthrough in his political crisis," said political commentator Shigezo Hayasaka.

Hashimoto gave out few additional details about the tax and spending plan, and there were immediately conflicting interpretations. The Finance Ministry and Hashimoto's office said it was not yet clear how much of a tax cut each taxpayer would receive or when they would get the money.

But the NHK television network reported that the rebate would be similar to a $15 billion tax cut enacted last January, which will give almost $500 to a family of four this year.

In recent weeks, Japan has been hit by a long list of grim economic data. Economists have been warning that Japan was falling into recession, and criticized Hashimoto for being slow to act. But in order to do the additional $30 billion in tax cuts, parliament must amend Japan's fiscal restraint law, the centerpiece of Hashimoto's economic policy to reduce the nation's deficit. Some critics had asserted that if Hashimoto switched positions on fiscal policy, he should resign.

The tax cuts are not permanent, lasting only two years. That leaves unclear whether consumers would go out and spend the money, or save it in anticipation of tax rates rising.

'Beach Boys' Blinded by the Sun

COMMENT
Richard Estrada

IF YOU'RE craving fun in the sun, go to the English-speaking Caribbean. But if consorting with modern-day pirates living off indentured servants is your idea of a good time, go instead to the English-speaking Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas.

Last year I wrote more than once about the nightmare facing some 40,000 mainly Chinese, Bangladesh and Filipino citizens working in the U.S. commonwealth located 4,000 miles west of Hawaii. Since then, the evasion there of U.S. labor, immigration and human rights standards in garment sweatshops has worsened.

Unfortunately, the news did not keep House Republican leaders from shelving a reform bill introduced by Democrat George Miller of California that would have required an increase in the island's minimum wage and improved living conditions for foreign workers.

Yet still newer information suggests that the appalling myopia of libertarian-Republican ideologues must continue to be challenged. Companies based on the U.S. mainland are having to compete with the indentured labor of mainly Chinese-owned factories based in the Northern Marianas. To capitalize on U.S. consumer affinity for domestic products, they sew "Made in Marianas/USA" labels into their garments.

In the bargain, the offshore sweatshops are able to avoid the kind of tariff and quota restrictions that face U.S. manufacturers who export abroad, as well as avoiding normal U.S. immigration and wage laws. And now here come investigators hired by the Department of the Interior to report that nearly a third of the foreign manufacturers doing business in the islands may be transshipping products assembled in China.

Advocates for reform such as former garment manufacturer Joe Allen of Dallas and ex-Saipan resident Peggy Japko of neighboring McKinney are incredulous at the human toll. Garment guest workers are banned by their employers from engaging in political or religious activities, or from even socializing or marrying during the period of their labor contracts.

In a recent case, a woman who accused a CNMI immigration official of raping her has been given a deportation order by CNMI officials after she undertook a civil lawsuit. The assailant has been convicted and sent to prison.

Whatever happens in the long run, the Northern Marianas' garment industry is enjoying a boom now. The Department of Commerce announced in January that the volume of garments manufactured in the CNMI increased by 45 percent over the previous year and that annual exports are expected to hit the $1 billion-a-year mark in 1998.

When U.S. garment manufacturers lose market share to foreign competitors under trade agreements, that's life. But when Congress knowingly winks at the loss of domestic market share to an abominable labor, immigration and trade regime in a corrupt backwater political entity over which Congress has authority, the word betrayal comes to mind.

Demanding that the CNMI immediately enter into negotiations with the U.S. government to phase in higher labor and immigration standards is the best alternative. The next best option is to break ties with the Northern Marianas altogether. But if neither of the above options is possible, the imposition of quotas on the garment production of the Marianas is a last resort.

Not that a group of Republican congressmen and staffers collectively known as "the Beach Boys" is likely to agree. The nearly 100 Capitol Hill insiders — led by House Majority Whip Tom DeLay and members of Majority Leader Dick Armey's staff — visited the Northern Marianas at CNMI government expense in 1997, at a per person cost ranging from $4,000 to $5,000.

It was hard work, to be sure. But as the Beach Boys explained, someone had to go out there and find out the truth about allegations from "the left" that labor practices on the islands are inhumane. But, as has been argued by every outfielder who has ever dropped a routine fly ball early in the season, the sun must have gotten in their eyes.

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Austria Confronts Its Shameful Past

William Drozdiak in Vienna

SIXTY years after the Nazis marched into Austria and were treated as conquering heroes by wildly cheering crowds, a dramatic transformation is taking place in the way this nation of 8 million people looks at one of the most sordid chapters in its long history.

History books have been rewritten so that students can learn that Austria was not just the first victim of Nazi aggression — as it long pretended — but rather behaved in many respects as an ardent sympathizer and active collaborator in the diabolical aims of its native son, Adolf Hitler.

In contrast to former president Kurt Waldheim, who for many years covered up his involvement in wartime atrocities, Austria's leaders now speak with striking candor about the fact that many compatriots were linked to Nazi crimes and that the rampant antisemitism that culminated in the Holocaust found fertile soil here.

Germany's neighbors are still struggling to cope with their legacy of collaboration with the Nazi regime. The ascendancy of a generation born after the war and the release of documents kept secret during the Cold War have done much to erode myths of resistance and states of denial that persisted throughout much of Europe.

The trial in France of Maurice Papon, which concluded this month with the wartime official's conviction of complicity in crimes against humanity, cast new light on the extent to which many French officials cooperated with the Nazi occupation. Switzerland has been forced to acknowledge that it was spared not because of a plucky army guarding its borders but because it provided useful financial services to the Nazis.

During ceremonies last month marking the 60th anniversary of the Anschluss, or annexation to Nazi Germany, Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima emphasized that the time was long overdue "for an open and critical debate so that Austria can draw the right lessons about its past."

He said it was "a long and painful process" to confess Austria's shared responsibility for Nazi crimes. But he insisted Austrians could no longer justify old myths about being overwhelmed by a foreign power. He noted that 700,000 Austrians were Nazi party members, and that many held leading positions in the hierarchy and were guilty of complicity in crimes against humanity.

President Thomas Klestil, Waldheim's successor, also stressed the need to deal squarely with the Nazi past and to do whatever is possible to make amends to the victims, especially members of Austria's once-thriving Jewish community who were exterminated or deported.

Klestil lamented that "those who were expelled then were invited much too late, and unconvincingly, to return home." He said that while serving as ambassador to the United States in the 1980s he felt a particular shame in meeting Austrian Jews who lost their homes and belongings during the Nazi occupation.

"I know how deeply they loved their old home country despite all that happened," Klestil said. "They would have had a right to experience Austria's rebirth, and I know that their contributions to our democracy and culture could have been invaluable."

Austria's changing assessment of its historical culpability has gone beyond words.

After two paintings by Egon Schiele loaned by Austria for a recent show in New York were seized because it was suspected they had belonged to Holocaust victims, Education and Culture Minister Elisabeth Gehrer declared that "immoral decisions" dating to the war must be rectified.

She ordered that once provenance is certified, all national art works confiscated by the Nazis would be returned to their rightful owners — a decision that experts believe will strip more than 100 masterpieces from Vienna's leading museums.

Austria announced recently it would resume cooperation with U.S. agents in the hunt for Nazi criminals, reviving an accord suspended in 1990 when Waldheim was barred from the United States after the Justice Department concluded that as a lieutenant in the German army in the Balkans, Waldheim helped the Nazi SS deport prisoners to slave labor or death camps.

"This accord symbolically ends the Waldheim affair complex and marks the emergence of a new Austria, which we hail," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress in New York.

School textbooks, which for decades nourished the myth that Austrians were the Nazis' first victims and suppressed the notion of any national guilt, have been rewritten to emphasize the direct complicity of many Austrians in the Nazi party and Nazi crimes. Vienna's mayor has decreed that the Steven Spielberg film Schindler's List will be required viewing for all schoolchildren in the city.

Klima acknowledged in an interview that the avalanche of foreign criticism during Waldheim's presidency from 1986 to 1992 was an agonizing and humiliating ordeal — one that made Austrians at times feel they belonged to a pariah state.

Once Waldheim left office, Klima's predecessor, Franz Vranitzky, moved quickly to refurbish the nation's image and revise Austria's view of history so that it reflected painful truths about widespread Nazi sympathies. As the first Austrian leader born after the war, Klima, 50, says he feels a special moral duty to sustain that legacy.

Klima says the need to confront the truth about the fascist era is not just a matter of coming to terms with history. He believes it also holds special political relevance for today's Austria.

The Freedom Party led by Joerg Haider has emerged as the biggest far-right movement in Europe and captured 28 percent of the votes in elections to the European Parliament last year. Haider has already staked his claim to replace Klima as Austria's next head of government after national elections are held next year.

Haider rejects any comparisons to Nazi or fascist forebears. None the less, he has lived up to his right-wing reputation by publicly praising the employment policies of the Nazi regime and waging a xenophobic campaign to expel foreign workers.

"We must always be vigilant in fighting against racism, fanaticism or indifference," Klima said. "Given the nature of our past, we must never forget how people can be misled by populist demagogues."

Living in Arms' Way

Evacuations come with the territory, discovers **Sue Anne Pressley** in Engle, New Mexico

ON THE morning after their wedding out on the family ranch back in 1983, when any newlywed couple might be expected to dawdle, Russell and Hazel Cain wrenched themselves from sleep early. Along with their wedding guests, they were forced to drive into this thinly peopled desert community, park in the church lot and wait — until the regularly scheduled missile test over their house and land was completed.

"We had lots of company, lots of out-of-town people," said Hazel Cain, 48. "They got a true New Mexico experience."

For the Cains and about 80 other families who live around Engle on this expanse of desert in southern New Mexico, having to leave home once or twice a month while a missile goes off at the nearby White Sands Missile Range is part of life. No one here seems to dwell much on the obvious reason for the evacuation: the slim chance that an errant missile could touch down on one's home.

In this vast state, where America's deepest military secrets are developed and put to the test, residents take the occasional disruption for granted.

But people who live here are sometimes conflicted about the presence and influence of the federal government. On one hand, they resent the intrusion into environmental matters and grazing rights. On the other, they recognize how utterly dependent the state's economy is on the machinations of Washington politics and the largess of the federal coffers.

"We have no logging, we have no oil and gas drilling, and the cattle industry is dying — that makes us entirely dependent on defense," said Jim Catron, the county attorney for Catron, Sierra and Socorro counties. "What are we going to do when [Senate Budget Chairman] Pete Domenici, R-New Mexico, dies or gets tired of the Beltway and comes home? May he live as long as Strom Thurmond, or this whole state will be a ghost town."

In this part of the country, missile test reports on the morning radio are as common as surfing reports in Los Angeles. As often as two or three times a week, a strip of U.S. Route 70 between Las Cruces and Alamogordo, ranging from 7 miles to 40 miles long, is shut down for certain periods to allow missiles to zoom across the highway. Woe be to the unsuspecting tourist who thinks he is going to glide through on a sizzling day that also happens to be a testing day.

White Sands — the largest military installation in the country, covering 3,200 square miles — is, not surprisingly, also the largest employer in southern New Mexico, where towns and job opportunities are scarce. About 6,700 people worked at the base in fiscal year 1997; during the Gulf conflict in the 1990s, the number soared to 9,000.

The complex has been the site of tests involving weapons from Nike, Viking and Lance missiles to multiple launch rocket systems to the Big One. Between 1945 and fiscal 1996, 41,593 missiles were fired here, according to the base's public-affairs office. In 1996 alone, not a particularly active year, 368 missiles were fired, and 32 other tests were performed involving bomb drops, explosives, guns and balloons.

Since 1960, the facility has operated what base officials refer to as "call-up areas," along the range's western boundary, and along a 40-by-40-mile square to the north. Under contracts with area ranchers, White Sands is allowed to evacuate residents for a 12-hour period, often beginning at a gruesome 5 a.m., thus doubling the available area for testing a long-range missile.

But the general attitude among residents is that it is only a little trouble, not a bad thing — even when they do make the occasional odd discovery on their land. Recently, for instance, Russell Cain happened upon a shaft of twisted green metal, about 8 feet long and 4 feet wide, pitted with holes, surprisingly lightweight, and flung down in one of the most remote parts of his immense ranch: more White Sands litter.

Sound Bites and Strategy

James Ledbetter

SPIN CYCLE
Inside the Clinton Propaganda Machine
By Howard Kurtz
Free Press. 324 pp. $25

AT THE heart of Spin Cycle, Howard Kurtz's new book, are two related and timely paradoxes. How is it that, at a moment when Bill Clinton has received as much sustained negative press coverage as any president in memory, he enjoys public approval ratings that FDR might envy? And why do major news outfits continue to emphasize every minor detail of what the president does and says, while current American attitudes toward Washington's day-to-day operations waver between indifference and hostility?

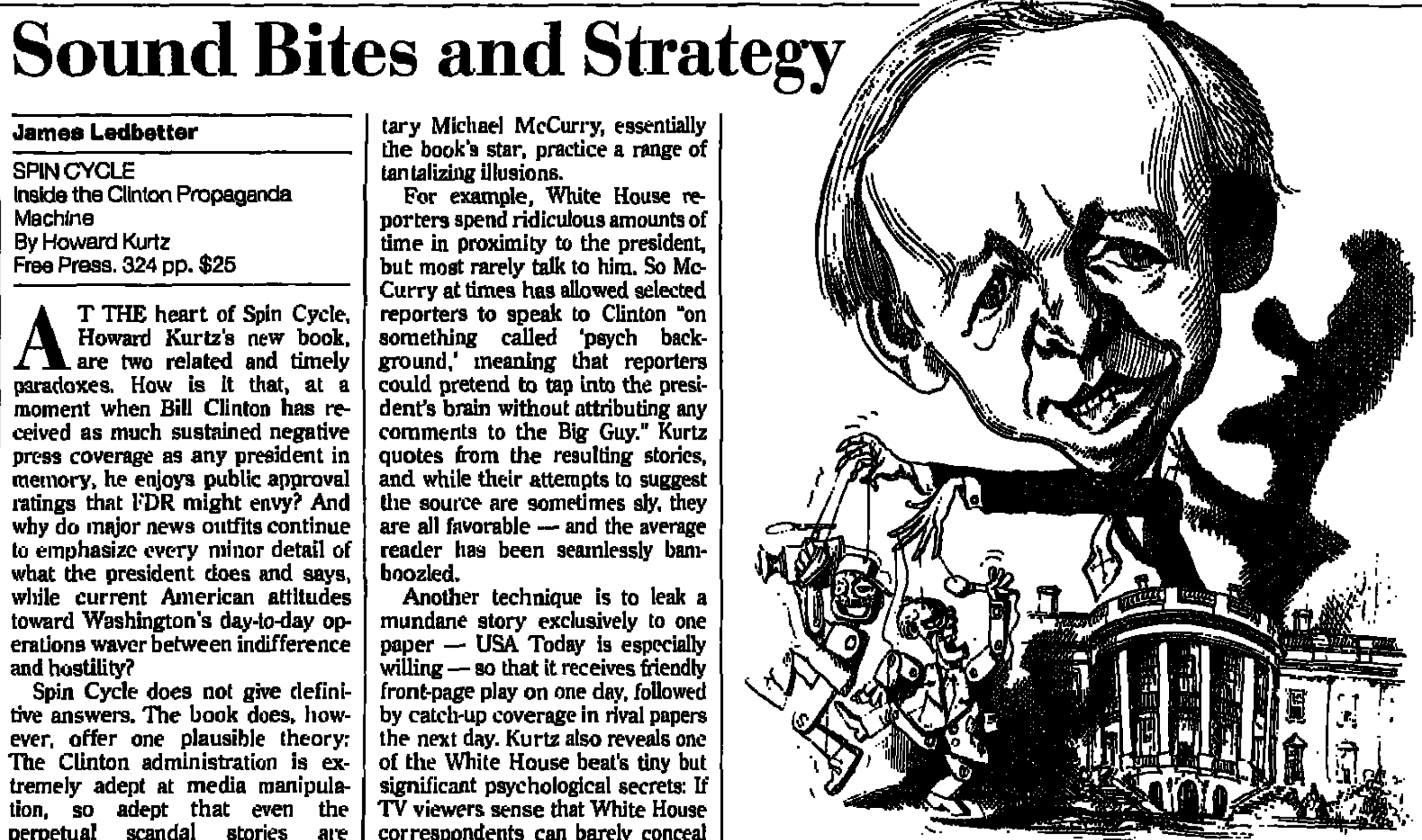
Spin Cycle does not give definitive answers. The book does, however, offer one plausible theory: The Clinton administration is extremely adept at media manipulation, so adept that even the perpetual scandal stories are harnessed for political gain.

To illustrate this thesis, Kurtz takes us deep inside the White House press operation. That is not original territory, but, within the confines of the genre, Kurtz has pulled off a minor miracle. White House press secretaries write memoirs, but they tend to be self-serving exercises in political payback; a few White House reporters have tried to capture the emptiness behind the beat's sound and flurry.

Kurtz, however, was allowed to bring his journalist's sensitivity to the other side of the podium, and could then compare the news manipulation he uncovered with the journalistic product that it spun out — rather like a media double agent. It's as if documentary filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker (The War Room) showed you what stories looked like before and after they were massaged by the Clinton War Room. That level of analysis provides Spin Cycle's best moments. We see White House press secretary Michael McCurry, essentially the book's star, practice a range of tantalizing illusions.

For example, White House reporters spend ridiculous amounts of time in proximity to the president, but most rarely talk to him. So McCurry at times has allowed selected reporters to speak to Clinton "on something called 'psych background,' meaning that reporters could pretend to tap into the president's brain without attributing any comments to the Big Guy." Kurtz quotes from the resulting stories, and while their attempts to suggest the source are sometimes sly, they are all favorable — and the average reader has been seamlessly bamboozled.

Another technique is to leak a mundane story exclusively to one paper — USA Today is especially willing — so that it receives friendly front-page play on one day, followed by catch-up coverage in rival papers the next day. Kurtz also reveals one of the White House beat's tiny but significant psychological secrets: If TV viewers sense that White House correspondents can barely conceal a sneer as they deliver that day's thin news gruel, very often they're right. The arcane requirements of the press secretary's job sometimes dictate that networks get stories just minutes before the evening broadcast, and correspondents can't help but transmit their frustration at being forced to go on the air unprepared.



White House press secretary Mike McCurry ILLUSTRATION: ROMAN GENN

PERHAPS most surprising is the way the White House handles the investigative reporters who would seem to be its biggest enemies. During the Senate campaign finance inquiries of 1997, Republicans complained that the White House was leaking damaging information days before it was to be the subject of hearings, in order to deflate the impact of public testimony. Kurtz demonstrates that this was exactly what was going on. In one extreme example, White House attorney Lanny Davis complained to Washington Post reporter Susan Schmidt about The Post's coverage of a damaging revelation. Schmidt said he should be happy the story was buried on page A8, and Davis replied: "You still don't get it. I wanted it on your front page with a glaring headline. That way Fred Thompson's not going to get a glaring headline." Kurtz presents these gems with minimal commentary, like a movie script.

In the end, the reader can't help but conclude that McCurry and his team understand something fundamental about the president's ability to speak directly to the public, an insight that the media have yet to digest. Given the enormous subject matter, there's plenty that Spin Cycle doesn't do. Since it captures events almost instantly — right up to the Monica Lewinsky scandal — Spin Cycle sacrifices most claims to historical understanding. Without a detailed discussion of earlier administrations, there's no way to know whether the Clinton White House has merely updated past scripts or actually invented Original Spin. There are also larger press criticisms that Spin Cycle suggests but does not explore. Throughout the book, Clinton officials complain legitimately that even the prestigious media spend little time producing well-researched, historically considered stories that would show the administration's triumphs (in areas like student loans and water pollution control). They conclude that the "gotcha" press is, in that crucial sense, biased against them.

It is equally true, though not noted in this book, that even journalists who most enjoy pantomiming an adversarial role spend virtually no time presenting comprehensive policy stories that might well show the administration's deeper shortcomings (in areas like NAFTA job creation and welfare reform). In that sense, the scandal-du-jour press serves the White House's interests quite well.

Hardcovers In Brief

Nonfiction

Sierra Nevada: The Naturalist's Companion, by Verna R. Johnston (California, $29.95)

"THE Sierra Nevada stands alone," writes the author, "as the longest, highest single-block mountain range in the United States. It is slightly over 400 miles long and 50 to 80 miles wide." Verna Johnston seems to have covered almost every one of those square miles, and what she hasn't encountered firsthand — the "extremely rare" wolverine, for example — she reports on courtesy of others' observations. She has seen sequoias, of course, and her evocation of their magnitude is one of the book's set-pieces: "The immensity is concealed by the harmonic proportions. From buttressed base to superstructure they look so perfectly proportioned that you hardly notice the twenty-foot width of the trunks or reflect that if one fluted base were moved into a city street it would block it from curb to curb."

Playing to the Camera: Film Actors Discuss Their Craft, edited by Bert Cardullo, Harry Geduld, Ronald Gottesman, and Leigh Woods (Yale, $30)

THE authors of these essays include many of cinema's greats: Charles Chaplin, Lillian Gish, Bette Davis, Marcello Mastroianni, Jack Nicholson, and others, all expounding on what they did best. Mary Astor conjures up the welter of things going on — "the babble of little instructions, from crew to crew from director to cameraman" — while an actor is preparing to project intimate emotions. Jeff Daniels comments on what makes a fellow actor enjoyable to work with: "Someone who's alive — and that means behind the eyes. I like someone who doesn't have everything preplanned, either, so that they can react to what I do." And Hume Cronyn gives the lie to an old Hollywood shibboleth: "The camera ... lies like hell and the actor must be prepared to aid in this deception."

John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West, by Patricia Junker (Hudson Hills, $60)

JOHN Steuart Curry (1897-1946), according to fellow "American Regionalist" Thomas Hart Benton, "never forgot that he came off a Kansas farm, that his folks were plain Kansas folks whose lives were spent with the plain, elemental things of earth and sky. His Art and the meanings of his Art were never cut loose from his background. To the end his ideal audience was a Kansas audience. Dealing with what that audience experienced and knew about, John wanted its appreciation more than anything else. He didn't get it." Curry's images stay close to the heartland but also get beyond it, to an America that's edenic, mythic, leaning toward an isolationist's sense of the tragic; in his 1938 painting "Parade to War," the soldiers resemble skeletons even before they've left home. Even Curry's down-on-the-farm scenes such as his "Kansas Pastoral" sequence for the Kansas statehouse in Topeka — including "The Unmortgaged Farm" and "Farmer's Family" — take scenes of domestic husbandry and make them epic. Curry's Midwest is a place of tornadoes and golden wheat fields and good strong souls.

Chronicler Across the Continents

Bonnie Greer

LADY MOSES
By Lucinda Roy
HarperFlamingo. 382 pp. $24

SINCE a great deal of contemporary African-American women's fiction takes place exclusively within the confines of the United States and the American experience, it often has a kind of comforting familiarity. However, this narrowness of focus can too often cause weaker books to descend into a kind of parochialism, to become mired in bathos and laden with platitudes. Perhaps the next level is to be found in the wider world, where African Americans can write in a larger context. The poet Lucinda Roy, with her debut novel, Lady Moses, faces the challenge head-on.

This ambitious book chronicles, in three parts, life in the South London of the 1960s, the Virginia of the 1970s, and the West Africa of the 1980s. The saga of Jacinta Louise Buttercup Moses and her road to redemption also encompasses the story of her black African writer-father, Simon Moses, and her white English actress-mother, Louise Buttercup.

The parts are framed by an account of Jacinta's return, with her daughter Lady, to witness the death and burial of the strong and eccentric Louise. This journey fuels Jacinta's memories of her poverty-stricken but happy bohemian childhood, which also included Ruskin Garland, the writer/warlock friend of her father, and Alfred Russel-Smyth, the flamboyantly homosexual friend of her mother. But when Simon Moses died suddenly, Louise Buttercup went mad, and Jacinta was placed in a foster home of Dickensian squalor inhabited by silent, urine-soaked babies and her foster mother's seedy husband. With her childhood idyll over, this daughter of both Africa and Europe was subjected to a sexual assault by the sinister Maurice Beadycap. She also witnessed the death of her friend, whose blackness she loved to see against the snow.

Jacinta survives to marry a white American writer, Emmanuel Fox III, who duly whisks her off to America and away from the dismal reality of her life in England. Unfortunately, Manny Fox turns out to be a brute, liar and madman who terrifies his own mother. He callously rejects their disabled daughter, Lady, but the marriage is salvaged when Jacinta consents to go to Africa with him for a work project.

There she meets Esther Cole, an internationally acclaimed singer, and most important, John Turay, a mine-worker whose love restores her to herself. Manny's subsequent death in a car accident provides both Jacinta and Lady with an opportunity to forge a new life.

LUCINDA ROY'S talent lies in the miniature. She has the ability to paint a scene or evoke an emotion with the minimum of words. Her account of Jacinta's giving away her brassiere to a market woman; the way the one-armed Lady looks while swimming; the image of a house on stilts high above the African soil — these are beautifully and precisely told. Julie Andrews's smile makes "a streak across the screen the way headlights do in those night photographs." Most poignant of all, Roy captures a child's terror in living with a mentally unstable parent. The uncertainty, emotional exhaustion, and grief are vividly rendered.

Yet it is in the latter half of the book that Jacinta herself makes a statement that best sums up the problem of this first novel: "I'd realized early that no one knew anyone else from the inside." However, the author makes sure that we know a great deal about Jacinta's inside, to the detriment of any other reality.

The first-person narrative, while indeed powerful, gives the novel a claustrophobic quality, a bit like being inside a moving automobile with its windows and doors locked. You long to stretch your legs, sniff the air and look at the scenery, but you cannot get out. The overly plotted structure marches relentlessly forward, seldom giving the writing opportunity to breathe. The occasional anachronism strains the book's plausibility. It is doubtful that "life sucks" was in common usage even among the English upper-classes of the time, let alone part of the vocabulary of a kid from a sturdy working-class background growing up in South London.

The breadth of Lucinda Roy's ambitious scope is to be applauded. I hope that with her next novel she will demonstrate its depth.

Asia crisis 'poses further threats to growth'

Alex Brummer in Washington

THE crisis in Asia is far from over and may pose a further threat to global growth, according to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook report published this week. The troubles in East Asia, exacerbated by the uncertainties over Japan's economy, have forced the IMF to downgrade its forecast for global growth this year to 3 per cent, against the 3.5 per cent it predicted in December and the 4.5 per cent expansion projected last autumn.

This confirms that the IMF has consistently underestimated the impact of the crisis in Asia on output and trade in industrial and developing countries.

The biggest downward revisions have been seen in Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand where, IMF economists report, "the drying up of private foreign financing together with the large currency depreciations and declines in asset prices are causing sharp contractions in domestic demand".

It has cut its growth forecast for Asia's newly industrialised countries by 4.2 per cent to just 1.8 per cent.

The IMF's chief economist, Michael Mussa, warned of a possible further decline in output from Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand. He is also worried about India, where the budget deficit is uncomfortably high, and China, where the IMF expects growth to fall to 7 per cent in 1998. But the Fund is predicting an Asian bounce-back next year.

The IMF has also cut growth projections for 1998 in the industrial world by 0.5 of a percentage point to 2.4 per cent. However, British growth is still seen at 2.3 per cent, a more benign prediction than that from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris earlier this month.

The biggest potential problem for the industrialised nations is Japan. IMF staff argue that although Japan's downturn (it will be in recession for the first half of this year) has been exacerbated by the Asian crisis, many of its problems are homegrown. They point to the financial sector, notably the bad loans bedevilling its banking system; the delays in reform to restructure the economy; and the decision to remove fiscal stimulus last year when the economy was too fragile.

While the IMF has hopes that a new package of tax cuts and public spending may help to improve Japan's economy in the second half of this year, it fears recovery could be impeded in 1999 by fiscal tightening and urges Japan to introduce further measures.

Among the rest of the rich economies, growth has been sustained by recovery in Western Europe and robust growth in the Anglo-Saxon economies of the United States, Canada and Britain. In Germany output will increase from 2.5 per cent to 2.8 per cent, and expansion in France will be even stronger.

The report predicts that the strength of the pound could soon start to reverse itself, providing some much-needed relief for the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and British exporters. The surge of the pound — up more than 30 per cent in a year — has created havoc for UK manufacturers and has put Mr Brown under pressure to lower its value.

The IMF expects the pound to "correct downwards against other European currencies" as the deficit in Britain's balance of payments increases and growth in the European economies surges past the UK.

The IMF still has serious concerns about European monetary union (EMU), particularly the lack of flexibility in labour markets. It fears that Europe, without the ability to adjust exchange rates after EMU, could face even higher unemployment unless it tackles the labour market problems.

The IMF also seems more cautious about the US economy. It notes that the consequences of the strong dollar together with the Asian crisis will lead to a swelling of the current account deficit to $230 billion this year, some 2.75 per cent of gross domestic product. This, together with the strength of asset prices in the US economy, may lead the US Federal Reserve to raise interest rates.

Mr Mussa suggested that the world economy could tolerate a correction of 20 per cent in the US stock markets without much real impact — although a fall of 50 per cent would be a different matter.

The Asian crisis is also taking its toll in Latin America, where the IMF estimates it has wiped out 1.5 per cent of growth this year, though output will still be up by 3.4 per cent.

World Economic Outlook report published by the IMF, Washington

When Mammon takes on God

The financial markets maybe eyeing the Church but there's life in religion yet, writes **Larry Elliott**

IN THE wake of last summer's flurry of building society and insurance company stock market flotations, the City looked around for other mutual organisations that could be "put into play".

The Co-op, the Automobile Association and Bupa are all seen as potential targets, but HSBC came up with the ultimate mutual organisation for re-engineering: the Church. It all makes sense for the financial markets. The Church is a strong brand, an instantly recognisable product — religion — and assets in prime locations around the country.

Moreover it has been underperforming for years, seeing its customer base desert it for the DIY superstore and garden centre. Last Sunday was the high point of the Christian calendar, yet it is unlikely that more than one in four adults in Britain went to church. Something is going wrong — but nothing that management consultants and focus groups could not put right.

The subtext of all this, however, is that the Church — at least in its present form — is finished. God has been defeated by Mammon, with most people only seeing the inside of a church for a wedding, itself now such an act of conspicuous consumption that for many the extravagance of the occasion is more important than the act itself.

But how much of this is true? Can man live by bread alone now? Or is there some deep spiritual need still to be satisfied?

If the mass hysteria that followed the death of Diana is anything to go by, there is still a yearning for something to believe in. It is hard, otherwise, to explain the iconography, the collective show of faith and the intolerance of those who refused to grieve in the "correct" way.

At the same time, television is providing its own, warped form of the confessional with talk shows in which a participant confesses to having sex with the mother-in-law, or some other "sin". Meanwhile the innocent party is publicly humiliated. The justification for this "entertainment" is that it is giving the punters what they want, presumably in the same way as Christians were tossed to the lions to amuse the citizens of ancient Rome.

In the end decadence took its toll. Although ancient Rome was technologically advanced and seemed militarily impregnable, by the time it was beset by the barbarian hordes it had been hollowed out from within.

During the thousand years between the demise of Rome and the Reformation, the role of the Church changed. It ceased to be a solvent and became the orthodoxy. Having been a force for change in its early years, the Catholic Church became a force that resisted change.

In his book The Wealth And Poverty Of Nations, David Landes argues that there was a link between countries that adopted Protestantism and economic development. "In manufacturing centres in France and western Germany, Protestants were typically the employers, Catholics the employed," he writes.

"In Switzerland the Protestant cantons were the centres of the export manufacturing industry; the Catholic ones were primarily agricultural. In England, which by the end of the 16th century was overwhelmingly Protestant, the Dissenters [read the Calvinists] were disproportionately active and influential in the factories and forges of the nascent industrial revolution."

Landes highlights two reasons why the Protestant communities forged ahead — the emphasis on literacy for both boys and girls so that everybody could read the Bible, and the obsession with the management of time.

By contrast, Spain and Portugal lost out because "religious passion and military crusade drove away the outsiders and discouraged the pursuit of the strange and potentially heretical".

"The Protestant Reformation ... changed the rules. It gave a boost to literacy, spawned dissents and heresies and promoted the scepticism and refusal of authority at the heart of the scientific endeavour. The Catholic countries, instead of meeting the challenge, responded by closure and censure."

As a result, the events of the 16th century were pivotal in the development of the modern world.

As Richard Tawney put it in Religion And The Rise Of Capitalism: "When the age of the Reformation begins, economics is still a branch of ethics, and ethics of theology; all human activities are treated as falling within a single scheme whose character is determined by the spiritual destiny of mankind. The appeal of theorists is to natural law, not utility; the legitimacy of economic transactions is tied by reference less to movements of the market than to moral standards derived from the traditional teaching of the Christian Church."

However, the most important mechanisms by which the medieval Church exerted economic influence — the idea of the just wage and the ban on usury — were quickly swept away and religion was converted "from the keystone which holds together the social edifice into one department within it, and the idea of the rule of right is replaced by economic expediency as the arbiter of policy and the criterion of conduct".

Tawney's warning in 1922 is, if anything, even more pertinent today, when the market is treated as a god, and the high priests of the new orthodoxy are the technocrats who run multinational corporations, the global entertainment industry and systems of economic management.

The Church's role has also changed, moving again from that of insider to outsider, from defender of the orthodoxy to champion of the poor and dispossessed. It was the Church of England that warned in the 1980s of the damage to the social fabric being caused by Thatcherism, and churches of all denominations are at the forefront of the Jubilee 2000 coalition for debt relief for the most impoverished nations.

That is not to say the Church is becoming a revolutionary vanguard. But those who write off religion and faith do so at their peril. Organised religion has shown great staying power, and it is perhaps telling that those searching for a "third way" in politics are harnessing the power of the Church. There is a recognition that Tawney was right when he said that economic ambitions make good servants but bad masters.

"Harnessed to a social purpose they will turn the mill and grind the corn," Tawney said. "But the question, to what end the wheels revolve, still remains; and on that question the naive and uncritical worship of economic power, which is the mood of unreason too often engendered in those whom that new Leviathan has hypnotised by its spell, sheds no light."

The Wealth and Poverty of Nations (Little, Brown), published on April 30

High-rise year for US bosses

Joanna Coles in New York

UNCONCERNED by the fact that the average pay rise for their white-collar staff was a mere 3.8 per cent last year, American chief executives have enjoyed a salary increase of 35 per cent in the same period.

At the top of the league is Sanford Weill, who heads the Travelers Group and now takes home $230.7 million.

Meanwhile Henry Silverman, chief executive of Cendant, who does not appear in the top 10 salary league, can at least take comfort when it comes to stock options. In the league of packages, his $832.9 million holds top position.

Michael Eisner, chairman of the Walt Disney Corporation, received "total compensation", including salary and stock options which he cashed, of $524.7 million. The late Roberto Goizueta, who until he died last year headed Coca-Cola, took home $111 million, most of which was in stock options he also cashed.

Richard Scrushy weighs in at number three in the salary chart, taking home $106 million. His rise is remarkable given the speed with which he built his company Healthsouth from an initial investment of $50,000 only 14 years ago. He is in fourth place on package remuneration with $216 million.

Business Week magazine, which compiles the list of America's top-earning executives, commented: "Good, bad or indifferent, virtually anyone who has spent time in a corner office of a large public company saw his or her net worth rise by several million."

There are no women on either list.

While the average increase for blue-collar workers was 2.6 per cent, Business Week pointed out that overall the rise for top executives was actually less than the 52 per cent increase they enjoyed the previous year.

But the pay cheques were bigger than ever before.

Rachel Baird on how new guidelines may help resolve the dilemma that many charities face over funding from big business

Finding a balance in the books

HOW should charities decide which donations to accept and which to reject? Should development agencies, for example, accept or seek money from the oil giant BP? Several development charities are discussing the possibility of forming relationships with the company, and a senior fund-raiser with at least one of them is watching hopefully.

Help for charities agonising over whether to reject donations from a particular source appeared last month in the form of guidelines from Britain's Institute of Charity Fund-raising Managers (ICFM). The hope was to clarify what the director, Stephen Lee, says is the "murky" and fragmented law on the matter.

Legally and ethically, he says, "it is actually very difficult for registered charities to refuse voluntary donations". Trustees have a responsibility to maximise benefits for the charity's beneficiaries and must not allow their personal views to affect decisions on particular donations.

There are, however, three situations in which donations can properly be turned away: where money is clearly the product of criminal activity; where the aims of the donor are entirely inimical to the charity's — tobacco manufacturers and cancer charities being the obvious example; and where charities can show that accepting the money would be likely to cause a nett fall in the resources available to their beneficiaries, because other donors would be upset and stop giving.

The National Childbirth Trust in the UK recently learned the hard way that taking $66,000 from formula-milk producer Sainsbury's would cause internal strife and bad publicity. It also published a set of guidelines on donations last month. The guidelines divide potential sources of donations into three areas: "no go" — for example, companies that sell own-brand formula milk, and arms and tobacco manufacturers; "grey" — for example, alcohol; and "generally OK" — for example, banks and pushchair makers.

The trust's guidelines also apply to sponsorship. Companies are increasingly keen on this sort of higher-profile giving because it boosts their reputations far more effectively than a discreet cheque in the post. But there are greater risks involved. "It makes you more vulnerable to any sense that you might have been compromised in some way," says head of fund-raising, Andy Keen Downs.

Some other charities have developed policies to help them decide with whom to do sponsorship deals, even though donations are not automatically screened. Christian Aid has a 13-point list of activities with which it will not be associated. The Cancer Research Campaign, in contrast, has a blanket policy of no tobacco money, but it looks at other potential relationships on a case-by-case basis.

Apart from the danger of a charity being tarnished by association, there is also a danger that the company will exert — or be seen to exert — improper influence over a charity. Ruth Jarratt, Age Concern's fund-raising and marketing director, says: "The critical consideration for any charity is whether you're being bought off" — persuaded to tone down campaigns that damage a company, for example.

Yet Age Concern, Christian Aid and Friends of the Earth say they may be willing to work with companies whose practices are not ideal, but where they believe there is the potential to bring about positive change.

Fund-raising managers agree that there are some hard, fine-line decisions to be made. But some fear that certain charities are neglecting morality and behaving too much like companies themselves.

The Funding for a Change movement grew from one charity's dilemma about taking money from Shell, following the execution of Ogoni activists in Nigeria. Since May 1996 the movement has brought together more than 100 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at a series of meetings to discuss the terms on which to engage with companies. The hope is to agree a manifesto that will be the basis for a dialogue between an alliance of NGOs and the corporate world.

Ben Gretton, of Platform, which co-ordinates Funding for a Change, says his impression of a recent National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) seminar on fund-raising "with a conscience" was that "a lot of the big charities were behaving like corporations themselves, in terms of not having an ethical framework for decisions".

And one key condition for public support, identified in the Deakin report on the voluntary sector and in the conclusions of the NCVO seminar, is openness. If a source of income or other support is legitimate, then surely charities — like political parties — should be willing to publish it.



Devil's advocates . . . Protesters hand out leaflets for Friends of the Earth at a Shell conference in London last year. But should they accept a donation from the oil giant? PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GOD[illegible]

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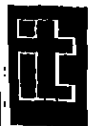
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A sorry apology from Clinton

CITY OF WORDS
John Ryle

THE English are famous for saying sorry, apologising at the drop of a hat. It does not mean they feel guilty or accept responsibility. "Sorry" is ambiguous: it may signify condolence without remorse, or it may mean they are really sorry, repentant as well as regretful. Sorry's not the hardest word. What is hard is knowing what it means.

It's not just the English. The spate of public apologies by world leaders merits sceptical examination. Tony Blair has apologised for the Irish famine; the Japanese prime minister has apologised for the second world war; the Pope has apologised — or repented — for the behaviour of the Catholic Church during the Holocaust. And the United States president has apologised — in Africa — for slavery. But it is not quite clear who is saying sorry to whom. Or on whose behalf. Or how sorry they really are.

During President Clinton's tour of Africa he apologised not once but twice: in Uganda he apologised for the slave trade; in Rwanda he apologised for Western inaction in the face of the Rwanda genocide. Back at home Clinton was attacked by the right for "grovelling and pandering" during his African tour. They pointed out that the slaves who were shipped to North America came not from Uganda but from West Africa, that on both sides of the continent Africans themselves were also involved in the slave trade, and that slavery still exists today in Sudan and Mauritania. From the left it was argued that if there was to be an apology it should be directed not at Africans but at black Americans.

It was certainly odd that Clinton chose Uganda for his statement, rather than Senegal, where he went a week later, making a special visit to the 18th century slave depot on Gorée Island. On Gorée he could have taken a look at the museum of slavery, an exemplary exhibit that pulls no punches on the participation of Arabs and Africans in the slave trade — as well as the British, the Dutch, the French and half a dozen other European nations.

Clearly, to demand a simultaneous apology from the governments of all countries whose present-day citizens may have had ancestors involved in the slave trade is impractical. If an apology is desirable, there is nothing wrong with one successor government leading the way. But the phrasing of Clinton's apology reveals the difficulties this entails. "Going back", he said, "to the time before we were even a nation, European Americans received the fruits of the slave trade. And we were wrong in that." To say slavery was wrong is hardly contentious. But to conflate the "European Americans" of the 19th century with a contemporary presidential "we" is problematic. On the one hand there is the extensive subsequent genetic mixing between blacks and whites and the fact that a large proportion of European immigration occurred well after the end of slavery. On the other is the oddity of the idea of inherited moral responsibility, of the visiting of the sins of the fathers on the sons.

You might argue that if contemporary Americans of so-called European descent are "wrong", it is not because some of their ancestors benefited from the slave trade but because they are all still benefiting from the historical advantage this gave them. This, though, would raise the question of financial reparations. In Africa, too, debt relief would be more useful than expressions of regret. But both of these are areas, with real-world financial implications, that Clinton does not want to get into.

In the case of Rwanda, Clinton is on even stickier ground. Here, it seems, he was moved to apologise on behalf of the entire world: "The international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of the responsibility for this tragedy . . . We did not act quickly enough after the killing began." Clinton's acknowledgment of Western ineptitude in the face of this tragedy is welcome, but the apology is disingenuous. Non-intervention was US policy, not an oversight. It learned its lesson in Somalia. And Clinton neglected to mention the more recent massacres of Rwandan Hutus in the Congo. This time the killings were perpetrated largely by units of the Rwandan army, the army of a government enjoying direct US support, the government now favoured with a presidential visit. The US government knew about these massacres and did nothing.

Clinton's apologies in Africa were not exactly insincere but they were clearly subordinate to political interests. And in politics you only say sorry when it suits you. ©

Boulder – an island of PC values in a redneck pond

Simon Hoggart

I *SPENT* last week in Boulder, Colorado, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. It was the setting for the annual Conference on World Affairs, which sounds boring, but isn't. Like most campus towns in the Old West, Boulder is an island of liberal chic amid the gun-toting rednecks and fundamentalists we assume are all around us. There may be more places offering falafel than hamburgers.

It's not true, as alleged, that the police give an incense stick with every speeding ticket, but the bus drivers can choose their own Muzak. Mine picked Mahler. The joke goes: "How many Boulderites does it take to change a lightbulb? None; they just form a support group called 'Coping with darkness'."

On Sunday my hosts and I went to watch a street comedian downtown. He made two-headed balloon animals called "Chernobyl dogs". When a man went by on a bike, pulling a sort of wheeled tent with a baby inside, he shrugged scornfully and said: "Boulder dad."

The conference brings together about 120 people from around the world to Colorado university. Studs Terkel, the great historian of 20th century America, gave an extraordinary speech in a voice which sounded like Jimmy Durante, powerful and funny, sometimes bitter but just as often hopeful.

One of the more attractive things about American radicals is that, unlike the harsh cynics of the modern British left, they have a terrific streak of optimism. In its way, social justice and union rights are just as much a part of the American dream as two cars and a house with central vacuuming.

He was sharp about the way corporations and technology combine to order us about. "I was in the Atlanta airport, and I caught the little monorail they have there. A young couple ran on as the doors were closing and an electronic disembodied voice said: 'Due to late entry, there will be a 30-second delay', and everyone just glared furiously at this couple. So I shouted up to the loudspeaker: 'George Orwell — your time has come — and gone', so they all glowered at me instead."

Naturally the No 1 subject for the week has been what's known here as the presidential pecker. (You can now buy a "White House intern kit" including a pair of kneepads and a breath mint.)

Molly Ivins, the celebrated Texan columnist, had just been in Canada. "Our neighbours in the north are the most reasonable people on the face of the earth. For them, it must be like living next door to the Simpsons." Like many feminists, Molly is on the president's side — a source of some bafflement, especially to those non-feminist men who think his behaviour disgusting and inexcusable.

Molly's general point was that it has nothing to do with Clinton's political skills, which remain considerable. Even those American liberals who don't believe there is a unified conspiracy against Clinton know there is a confluence of moneyed interests desperate to get rid of him. The gist of what they're saying is, "Yes, what he does is unacceptable. But, this is one battle against the right that we cannot afford to lose." They don't then add: "So we'll just have to swallow hard and put up with it," but that's what they mean.

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As Europe's supermarket shelves groan under the weight of African goods, **Fred Pearce** asks whether the new agro-industries are helping local economies or destroying both the environment and jobs

Bloom or bust?

AFRICAN exports are booming. Scan the supermarket shelves of Marks & Spencer or Waitrose in Britain and beside the traditional exports of coffee and tea you will find asparagus from South Africa, sweetcorn from Zimbabwe, beans from Gambia and, above all, produce from Kenya.

Thanks to a transfer of European hot-house technology to the plains of East Africa, Kenya is fast turning into a major source of winter vegetables. They don't come cheap, of course (at M&S, Kenyan "hand-trimmed" green beans currently retail at $10 a kilo), but they are of high quality and available in the depths of winter.

And Kenya has even supplemented the Netherlands as a major source of cut flowers. In greenhouses, chill rooms and packing halls across Kenya I watched thousands of flowers being grown, harvested, trimmed, packed and labelled for shipment to Britain. And I saw orders coming in from UK supermarkets for green vegetables and ready-prepared salads that would be delivered to the shelves within 48 hours.

The latest technology is all there: tinted tents for roses, which grow faster in red light: floodlights on the runner beans to mimic long European summer evenings; drip irrigation that the Israelis would be proud of; soil probes to monitor moisture and fertiliser levels.

Growers such as Dicky Evans, the British-born boss of Homegrown, the leading flower firm in Kenya, have turned horticulture into a top export industry for Kenya, alongside tea, coffee and tourism. It all began 15 years ago when Evans, an irrigation engineer, went into partnership with a vegetable grower selling to Asian markets in the UK. Soon he was trucking beans to the airport himself, to cut out unreliable exporters, and diversifying into other crops.

Today he has nine farms across the country, growing flowers by a hippo lake in the Rift Valley and green vegetables at Timau, on the slopes of Mount Kenya. His produce is mostly on supermarket shelves in the UK two days after being harvested.

Evans makes his money by "adding value" in Kenya. "We started putting the vegetables into bags here, then topping and tailing them, then putting labels on," he says. His flowers, too, are "pruned, sleeved and labelled" locally, right down to the bar code and price sticker. Pursued by ambitious copycat operators (including one run by President Daniel arap Moi's son, Gideon), Evans now puts together entire bouquets and ready-prepared salads.

You'd think M&S might be touchy about buying ready-prepared salads from a country with a cholera epidemic (albeit not in areas where Homegrown has farms). But such is Homegrown's dedication to hygiene that there appears to be little cause for concern.

Evans rates himself a model employer and good neighbour. Pay is $1,200 a year, "the same as Moscow", and roughly five times the Kenyan national average. "They used to need famine aid up in Timau," he says. "But now we are a major element in a thriving rural economy." However, he wasn't so popular last summer when Homegrown's operation dried up two local rivers at the height of the dry season — an event that has forced him to build a reservoir to capture seasonal flood waters.

Evans gets into spats with critics, though more with white liberals than indigenous Africans. He brushes off criticisms about pesticides polluting a protected lake or "Deep South" plantation conditions on his farms managed by expatriate Britons. Charged with contributing to global warming through his air-freight mileage, he responds that transporting a Kenyan rose to Europe uses less energy than the extra heating and lighting involved in growing the same stem in, say, the Netherlands.

On Lake Victoria new technology has exploited, impoverished, degraded and starved the local fishing communities

He has drawn up a detailed environmental code of conduct for the Kenyan flower industry where, he admits, toxic pesticides are widely employed. At Homegrown all staff are given regular tests for cholinesterase, the body enzyme vital to the nervous system that can be suppressed by pesticides such as organophosphates. How many British farmers do that? And most of his critics concede that he acts on criticisms.

Many people wonder if growing green beans and red roses for Britons is a proper activity for a country on the breadline, with disease on the rampage, bandits in the hills and infrastructure crumbling after decades of neglect and corruption. But this is a transfer of technology from developed to developing countries that has worked. It employs people; puts money in their pockets without wrecking their health; and shows every sign of being environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. And if you think the above is a bit of a puff, it is because technology transfer is not always done the Dicky Evans way.

Take Kenya's other big new export to Europe — Nile perch. Sometime in the 1950s, British colonial fisheries officers threw some Nile perch into Lake Victoria, the world's second largest freshwater lake. Nothing much was seen of them until the late 1970s, when big fat perch more than two metres long and weighing 200kg started eating every other fish in sight (including some 200 species of cichlids found nowhere else on Earth), and establishing themselves as almost the only fish in the lake. It was, says Boston university fish biologist Les Kaufman, "the first mass extinction of vertebrates that scientists have had the opportunity to observe".

But the Nile perch turned out to be very tasty, so much so that within 10 years locals could no longer afford them because the price had soared.

Traditional fish-processing and mongering businesses in lakeside villages folded and all the perch were packed off to giant state-of-the-art filleting factories for export. Factories in the Kenyan lakeside town of Kisumu alone processed 200 tonnes of Nile perch a day — mostly for sale in Europe.

This is an efficiently run industry: the overall factory capacity is twice what fishermen can find to bring ashore and the perch are clearly being overfished — Kenyan catches are now only two-thirds what they were in 1989, and fish less than a kilogram in weight are regularly caught as net mesh sizes have come down from 30cm to 10cm or less.

Some people have made a lot of money out of this, mostly the factory owners in Nairobi, Israel, the East Asia and London. But a report last year by Eirik Jansen of the World Conservation Union and Richard Abila of the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute concluded that very little of the massive foreign exchange revenue is ploughed back into the fishing areas.

Five times as many fish still come out of the lake as 20 years ago, but the industry today provides far fewer jobs and less income for the lakeside communities. The report says that some 15,000 jobs have been lost in the traditional fishing industry compared with just 2,400 created in the Kisumu processing factories.

Kisumu is the poorest, worst fed city in Kenya. And out in the rural areas things are even worse. A few of the old fish processors linger, living off the scraps from the European table. In Obunga, a wretched shanty settlement behind the brewery in Kisumu, they cluster each morning around hand-carts delivering the factory left-overs: the skeletons, guts, skins and scraps of meat that are discarded by the filleting operation.

Here an army of some 600 people, mostly women, buy, cut up, dry and fry these scraps for sale throughout Kenya and neighbouring Rwanda, and even Zaire. The going rate for these scraps is 5 cents a kilo, compared with $4 a kilo for fillets in Nairobi fish shops.

According to Bernard Onyango, who introduced himself as secretary of one of the "committees" running the operation in Obunga, the 150 people working with him process a tonne of fish on a good day, producing a typical profit share-out of $30. And things are getting worse. "As processing in the factories gets better," he says, "we get less flesh on the skeletons." Meanwhile prices rise because of competition from fish-meal factories in Nairobi.

In the past 20 years the fisheries of Lake Victoria have become part of the global economy, much as the Kenyan horticulture industry has. Around the flower and vegetable centres the benefits to locals of this technology transfer can be seen everywhere. But on Lake Victoria the new fish-processing technology has exploited, impoverished, degraded and even starved the local fishing communities.

Cut above the rest . . . flowers are packaged for the British market

Flood of complaints over Yangtze dam project

Catherine Caufield

CHINA "will have to rely on the military or a man-made flood to force people out of their homes" to complete the giant Three Gorges dam on the Yangtze River, says a senior Chinese official involved in moving the 1.2 million or more people that the dam will displace.

The anonymous official's statement comes in a study released last month by the International Rivers Network, in Berkeley, California, and Human Rights in China, a monitoring group based in New York.

It reports that "the largest forced resettlement ever undertaken" is plagued by bad planning, lack of land, inadequate funds and official corruption. The study's author, a Chinese social scientist and expert in resettlement projects associated with Chinese dams, uses the pseudonym Wu Ming ("no name") as protection against reprisals.

The Three Gorges Project Resettlement Bureau claims that 100,000 people have been moved in the five years since resettlement began, but Wu Ming calculates that the true number is fewer than 50,000. If the dam is to begin generating electricity in 2003 and be completed in 2009, at least 100,000 people will have to be moved every year for the next decade.

Both deadlines are crucial because the officials are counting on electricity sales starting in 2003 for a large part of the dam's financing.

According to the report, only a few resettlements live up to the Chinese government's policy and promises. These are mainly the "model examples of resettlement" which cost, on average, four times more than a typical operation of this kind.

A major problem is the lack of suitable resettlement land. About 30 per cent of the available land is too steep to farm. As much as 80 per cent is severely eroded. One peasant described resettlement sites as "looking like ditches from a distance and pigsties on closer inspection".

Many relocatees have simply returned to their homes in the flood zone. Resettlement officials have tried to cover up these failures by ordering local people to pose for visiting senior officials as happily resettled peasants or townspeople.

Urbanites, especially those working for government agencies, seem to be faring best. Many well-constructed offices and apartment buildings have been built with resettlement funds specifically for government employees.

But the virtual bankruptcy of most state firms means the government is unlikely to be able to keep its promise to create hundreds of thousands of new industrial jobs for the displaced.

Letter from southern Spain Joanna Crowson

All washed up

STRANGE things wash up on the southern beaches of Fortress Europe. From my balcony I have an excellent view of the beach and the *Paseo Maritimo*. Recently, groups of young men were to be seen strolling up and down, looking out to sea, apparently enjoying the view. They occasionally stopped and peered intently out to sea, arousing the interest of others loitering nearby. Still others raced up and down the wide, sandy beach on their motorbikes.

Suddenly there was a commotion and the cry went out: *"Paquete!"* The young men converged on a package and hauled it in to shallow water. Nothing could be seen of the parcel itself for the heaving crowd around it.

Soon young men began to break away: hands thrust quickly down the front of their trousers and they were off, running away awkwardly with wet shoes and bouncing trousers. Others quickly took their place in the scrummage.

It was all over in 15 minutes and the beach slowly emptied, except for a hessian rag slopping in the shallows.

With 45 per cent unemployment, and more than 70 per cent of the population depending directly or indirectly on a dying fishing industry, these unexpected windfalls must be a welcome addition to the local economy.

Many young men in Barbate with no hope of employment have become *busquemanos*, earning their living hauling away the bundles of cannabis illegally shipped in from Morocco by night. You can spot them easily about town — they are the lads with costly trials bikes. But this latest cargo came ashore in broad daylight, package by package, destined never to reach the markets of northern Europe. The consignment was snatched up by anyone caring to participate.

It is not the first time this had happened. Last December, after a collision at sea, 100kg washed up just outside town. The police, in their unwieldy Nissan Patrols, gave chase to dozens of young men on mopeds, rupturing the calm of a normally deserted beach. The following week more mopeds were sold in Barbate than in Madrid, and the local moped shops sold out. It was a blessing in disguise — from the point of view of the victims of a devastated economy.

Today I saw four packages come ashore. More and more people crowd the beach front, watching with tolerant interest. I was enthralled by the air of holiday excitement and the unusual sight of people flouting the law so publicly. There is, of course, safety in numbers.

Finally, towards the end of the afternoon, two Civil Guards turned up, and the beach cleared. They walked up and down the beach in unwitting parody of Barbate's young men until night fall.

MY NEIGHBOUR called by and, telling me that what has washed ashore is "best quality pollen", offered me a smoke. Conscious of my reputation as a teacher I refused. He wanted cigarette paper to roll a joint but, as there wasn't any, resorted to a piece torn out of the Guardian Weekly.

The next day my eight-year-old students caused me endless trouble shouting *"Paquete!"* to one another across the classroom. The recent events are already immortalised in children's games designed to torture the teacher.

Now that the excitement is over, I am mindful of the other, less pleasant packages that wash up all too frequently along this coast. These are the "wetbacks", another export from Morocco, illegal immigrants who fail to make it into Europe alive.

Countless others survive the difficult, dangerous and expensive crossing, only to be rounded up, imprisoned and sent straight back. A few reach relative safety and jobs in the greenhouses of Almeria.

Further along this treacherous coast, built at great public expense and placed above the Strait of Gibraltar, is the sculpture of a hand held out to Africa. In theory it represents Europe offering a symbolic helping hand to its poorer neighbours. I think it looks more like a hand held up with a clear and final message: "Stop. Fortress Europe. No entry."

Sahara tribe first to reach for the stars

Tim Radford

STONE AGE people built the first astronomical observatory centuries before anyone thought. Scientists working in the Sahara have identified a series of megaliths that predate Stonehenge in Britain and other sites by more than 1,000 years.

Around 6,500 years ago an unknown people living in Nabta, in southern Egypt, began dragging slabs of stone, nearly 3 metres high, into position on the west bank of the Nile.

The alignments run north-south and east-west, and point to the sun where astronomers estimate its solstice would have been 6,000 years ago.

"This is the oldest documented astronomical alignment of megaliths in the world," says Professor McKim Malville of the University of Colorado at Boulder, who — with colleagues from the United States, Egypt and Poland — has completed a satellite survey of the stones. "A lot of effort went into the construction of a purely symbolic and ceremonial site."

The ruins are beside what would have been the shoreline of a lake that filled with water about 11,000 years ago when the African monsoon moved north. It was used by nomads until 4,800 years ago, when the rainfall patterns shifted, and the area became arid and uninhabitable.

Five alignments radiate out from a central collection of stones. Beneath one was a carved rock resembling a cow standing upright.

The researchers report that they found the remains of several buried cattle, including a skeleton laid to rest in a clay-lined chamber. There were cinders from ancient hearths, and fragments of decorated ostrich eggs.

The stones are mute evidence of a vanished world — and a foretaste of the pyramid builders who would arrive 1,500 or 2,000 years later. Neolithic herdsmen came to Nabta, probably from further south in Africa, and used cattle in their rituals just as Masai tribesmen do today, says Prof Malville. Because Nabta was close to the Tropic of Cancer, the noon sun would be directly overhead and for a brief while each day, the standing stones would cast no shadows.

"These vertical sighting stones correspond to the zenith sun during the summer solstice," he says. "For many cultures in the tropics, the zenith sun has been a major event for millennia."

Some of the other alignments are still puzzling the archaeo-astronomers — scientists who specialise in interpreting patterns in stone left by vanished civilisations. Some of the monoliths would probably have been submerged in the lake and may have "marked" the onset of the rainy season. "The organisation of these objects suggest a symbolic geometry that integrated death, water and the sun," says Prof Malville.

The discovery points to a world peopled by nomadic herdsmen prepared to face daunting conditions.

The "high" culture of the Egyptians is traditionally thought to have been borrowed from Mesopotamia and Syria. But the forgotten stonemasons of Nabta clearly understood symbolism: Prof Malville and his colleagues believe that they, rather than the Assyrians or the Babylonians, may have triggered the social complexity that ended in the pyramids of the Pharaohs.

One of the megaliths found at a site in southern Egypt that scientists believe was built to mark the movement of the heavens

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

HOW did Action Man get that scar on his face?

ACTION Man's designers wanted to patent the figure — known as GI Joe in the United States. But lawyers advised them that there was little chance of patenting the human body, so they added the scar and were then able to patent it. — *Alan Lloyd, Schaumburg, Illinois, USA*

WHEN was the last man "pressed" into the Royal Navy?

THE Navy last used impressment during the war between Britain and the United States in 1812. Indeed, the practice was substantially the cause of the war — Royal Navy ships having been press-ganging British-born seamen from American vessels to fight against the French.

When, 40 years later, the Royal Navy next fought a major war (in the Crimea), the decision was made to proceed without impressment — and the success of this policy resulted in the practice falling into abeyance.

The power, in occasions of need, to impress into the Royal Navy any person of a seafaring character — excluding ferrymen and gentlemen — does, however, remain within the royal prerogative; although the royal warrant to the naval authorities does not currently permit this power to be exercised. — *Tom Hennell, Withington, Cheshire*

WHAT is scruggin, as in scruggin cake?

IN MY climbing and hill-walking days my Australian friends carried a tin of "scroggin" as emergency rations. This consisted of a mixture of oatflakes, nuts, dried fruit, chocolate and a little fat. It was stuffed into a tin and provided additional energy when required. It could also be used as a fuel source to heat a drink, and its use may have saved many lives. — *Brian Palmer, Noke Side, Hertfordshire*

WHY, on encountering cold air, does my nose run?

CONTRARY to David Boulton's theory about condensation (March 22), a runny nose is caused by an activity in the parasympathetic nervous system (the "automatic" part of our nervous system that controls body functions such as pulse, circulation, breathing, temperature, etc). In response to cold air several things can happen, one of which is the parasympathetic system stimulating increased activity in the nasal mucus glands. Thus your nose runs. — *Jim Fause, Blenheim, New Zealand*

ON THE back of a fruit juice carton it says "the cranberry is one of the only three fruits native to North America". Is this true?

APART from persimmons, your lengthening list of genuinely native American fruits should also include pawpaws *(Annona asimina triloba)* and papayas *(Carica papaya)*. Contrary to much ill-informed opinion — most of it British — these two fruits are not identical; they are unrelated. It should be noted that the persimmon, pawpaw and papaya all bear native American names and that among them only the persimmon has a real parallel elsewhere, in the Japanese kaki. Of similar interest are the native American muscadines, especially the North Carolina scuppernong. — *John Rodenbeck, Cairo, Egypt*

Any answers?

DOES any creature (apart from a human) show any appreciation of music — be it as rhythm or melody? — *John Kearney, Crosby, Merseyside*

ARE there still trawlermen hunched over radios reliant on the BBC radio shipping forecasts for their only source of weather information? — *Matt Hurst, Carrington, Nottingham*

HOW are television viewing figures calculated? How much of a programme do I have to watch before I am deemed to have "viewed" it? — *Hollin Jones, Cottingham, Yorkshire*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Stand by your song

OBITUARY
Tammy Wynette

TAMMY WYNETTE, the first lady of country music, whose tough, tear-stained voice propelled her from the cotton fields of Mississippi to musical stardom, has died from a blood clot at the age of 55. With five marriages, bankruptcy, an invalid child and a kidnapping, her life was the stuff of which country music is made.

Virginia Wynette Pugh was born on her grandparents' cotton farm in Itawamba County, Mississippi, and she later told with pride how she once picked 93kg of cotton in a day. By eight she had learned the piano and was soon accompanying the singing in church. In her teens she joined her mother in Birmingham, Alabama. At high school she was a member of the basketball team, and at 17 she abandoned her studies to marry. Five years later she was a divorcee with three daughters.

Wynette worked as a waitress, barmaid and beautician before moving to Nashville to try her luck as a professional singer. A secretary hired by record producer Billy Sherrill to stop aspiring singers entering his office was taking her lunchbreak as Wynette arrived in town. The singer was able to march straight in. A CBS producer, Sherrill recognised the keening strength of her voice, signed her — and chose her stage name.

Between 1967 and 1988 Wynette clocked up more than 50 albums and sold more than 30 million records. In 1967 "Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad" made the top 10, and "I Don't Wanna Play House" was the first of nearly 20 country No 1s.

Sherrill's conception of Wynette as the staunchly-conventional, suffering white southerner, complete with moralising choruses, was artfully combined with the detail of trailer-home life. Among the most famous of the ensuing hits were "D.I.V.O.R.C.E" and "Stand By Your Man", country hits in 1968 which later crossed over into pop.

The success of Stand By Your Man coincided with the beginnings of the women's liberation movement in the United States and the song was criticised by some feminists — although others could appreciate it as glorious parody. Wynette was unrepentant. "Although I consider myself more independent than many of the 'sisters' who criticised the song," she said, "especially when it comes to things like financial independence, being the family breadwinner, raising children alone and running a business, I am emotionally dependent on men and I wouldn't want it any other way."

The song resurfaced in 1992 when Hillary Clinton, addressing the nation on her husband's alleged infidelity with Gennifer Flowers, said: "I am not sitting here like some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette."

The singer retorted that Ms Clinton had managed to "offend every true country music fan and every person who has made it on their own with no one to take them to a White House". Ms Clinton apologised, and Wynette later performed at a fund-raising concert for the Democrats.

Wynette meanwhile faced her own battles against male chauvinism. Stand By Your Man, her 1979 autobiography, detailed her struggle for acceptance in a world where it was "just not worth the trouble to book women", as one talent agent told her. The most dramatic phase of her career coincided with her stormy 1968-1975 marriage to George Jones. Twenty years her senior, he was the most gifted country singer of his generation. He was also a heavy drinker. Their powerful duets included "We're Gonna Hold On" and "Golden Ring".

The turbulence in Wynette's private life subsided in 1978, when she married her fifth husband, songwriter George Richey — although the following year a kidnapping left her beaten and bruised on a south Tennessee interstate highway. The perpetrators were never found. In the 1980s her popularity dimmed as a new Nashville generation emerged. But she continued to have hits, and even appeared in a soap opera, Capitol. She also faced recurring illness and a spell in the Betty Ford clinic to cure dependency on a prescription drug.

Wynette retained the respect of her peers, and of the younger generation, and in 1991 she sang on the quirky hit single, "Justified and Ancient", by the British group, KLF. In 1993, she combined with Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn and Kitty Wells for the album Honky Tonky Angels, which celebrated women's role in the country music of the 1950s and 1960s. Her last album, One, released in 1996, reunited her with George Jones. Apart from her earlier husbands, she is survived by George Richey, five daughters, a son and seven grandchildren.

Dave Laing and Joanna Coles

Tammy Wynette (Virginia Wynette Pugh), singer, born May 5, 1942; died April 6, 1998



First lady of country . . . Tammy Wynette who went from rural poverty to stardom, divorce and illness

A talent to amuse

NEW RELEASE
Caroline Sullivan

NOEL COWARD **would have been 100 this year, and, had the great playwright and songwriter lived to see his centenary, he'd have approved of this tribute — an album of his songs interpreted by fetching young (and not so young) men. What he'd have thought of Texas is another matter, and Vic Reeves alone knows what he's doing on this celebration of the master of elegance and *bons mots*.**

These unlikely bedfellows, along with Damon Albarn, Robbie Williams and many more, were assembled by Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant, who approached the task with some imagination. He had to. Rock music isn't exactly brimming with artists capable of the loucheness Coward intended when he wrote these songs (most of which date from the thirties and forties, when the maestro was turning out a West End revue almost every year). Thus, while some choices are obvious — such as foxy old Bryan Ferry — others aren't immediately fathomable. For instance, why Albarn, Reeves, dull soul-chick Shola Ama . . .?

The answer is that they do make an odd sort of sense when you hear them — even Ama, whose wistful "Someday I'll Find You" is a testament to Craig Armstrong's gorgeous string arrangement and the indestructibility of the melody. And even Reeves isn't a disaster, reciting "Mrs Worthington" (as in "Don't put your daughter on the stage") as a poem, and resisting the urge to burst into song or in any other way ruin things.

Robbie Williams lets his inner ham run riot on "There Are Bad Times Just Around the Corner", imbuing the grumpy lyric ("They're filled with wrath on the Firth of Forth and sullen on Salisbury Plain") with peculiarly middle-aged campness. Bravo, sir. Suede's take on "Poor Little Rich Girl" is unorthodox — all giddy electronica and howling backing vox from one Raissa — but Brett Anderson's disenchanted vocal imparts a decadence that would have thrilled the Noëlster.

Sting, Elton and Paul McCartney turn their hands to various lounge-lizard numbers with the professionalism you'd expect. Texas successfully turn 1924's "Parisian Pierrot" into nu-soul, the Pet Shop Boys do the same less successfully on "Sail Away", and The Divine Comedy amusingly play it both ways on "I've Been to a Marvellous Party", alternating drawing-room piano and techno breakbeats.

There remains only to wonder why Damon Albarn and Michael Nyman's "London Pride" made the final cut. It was originally rejected as "unrecognisable" — and it is: a vocal-less synthesiser thing that's wandered in by mistake. Albarn and Nyman, dear boys, just didn't get the point.

Various Artists: 20th Century Blues: The Songs of Noël Coward (EMI)

Quick, send for SuperCooper

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

WHAT image do the fans of Adam Cooper hold most hotly in their hearts? Is it Cooper swaggering into act three of Adventures in Motion Pictures' Swan Lake, his black leather coat swinging with the brio of a 19th century dandy and his hair greased back like James Dean's? Or is it Cooper as the RAF hero of AMP's Cinderella, stripped to his slightly sweaty singlet and with a cigarette hanging negligently from his mouth as he crushes Cinders to his elegantly muscled chest? Certainly few will immediately recall the fine Siegfrieds or Romeos he used to dance with the Royal Ballet. For Cooper has now become famous for sex.

But dancers can't make a career out of being hunks, and Cooper has to wait until AMP's Swan Lake hits Broadway this autumn before he can repeat one of his trademark roles. He has thus accepted Scottish Ballet's invitation to dance in their revival of Tales Of Hoffmann at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, performing the role of the luckless romantic whose passion for women is sadistically manipulated by the supernaturally malign villain who stalks his every move.

The ballet was choreographed by the late Peter Darrell in 1972 and was his first full-length work for Scottish Ballet. It roughly follows Offenbach's opera, except that the Antonia character becomes an aspirant ballerina, rather than a singer, and Lanchbery's score mixes extracts from the opera with other Offenbach music. To ballet-goers it's also full of glances towards the 19th century classics. Act one, where Hoffmann is entranced by the mechanical doll Olympia, is Coppelia revisited; Antonia dancing herself to death in act two is Giselle; and the third act, where Dapertutto tries to tempt Hoffmann away from his religious vows, is just like act three of Swan Lake.

Darrell's choreography is confidently classical, with its sharply turned footwork counterpoised by a richly sculptural use of the body. Yet it is inflected with very unclassical humour, ensuring that a potentially creaky heritage ballet is quite briskly modern. When the ardent young Hoffmann leaps onstage to shake a friend's hand, he yanks the man aside so he can make a grab at his girl. Even the pastorally pretty male corps in act two aren't above fondling their partners' breasts.

Darrell made Hoffmann as a company showcase, and though it's 10 years since Scottish last danced it there are some well drilled and larky performances, particularly from the men. The ballerinas, though, are disappointingly short on personality and power, with the fine exception of Ari Takahashi, who makes an eerily doll-like Olympia, her little feet nipping and darting through the steps with comic, inhuman precision.

The situation is reversed with the male roles, however. Although Darrell made his reputation as a dramatic choreographer, the characters of Hoffmann and his vicious stalker are disappointingly thin. The choreography sketches their basic nature but doesn't look for individual motivation.

Yet if there's little in the writing to hold us in thrall, we're well compensated by the performances from Robert Hampton and Adam Cooper. Hampton's villain is a black hole sucking the rest of the stage into his orbit, while Cooper once again proves himself a rare dance actor. With his dark emotion-drenched gaze and intently nuanced body language, he invests even clichéd moments with a complex significance. Hoffmann's realisation that his Olympia is only a doll feels far more dreadful than a humiliating gaffe — Cooper watches with horrified nausea as her briefly beloved body is callously dismembered by its makers. Meanwhile his middle-aged Hoffmann is a touchingly credible loser, his emotions frayed round the edges, his confidence brittle. Admittedly Cooper's dancing in the classical divertissement lacks its old stamina and definition — suffering from two years away from the ballet stage. Yet he so convincingly acts as if he's dancing a great solo that you barely notice.

In fact he acts such a good ballet generally that you also barely notice the work's more transparent plot mechanisms and the fact that the choreography's early vigour and invention do decline towards the end. Scottish Ballet obviously don't want to break the relationship with Cooper, as they've commissioned him to choreograph a ballet for them. But it's uncertain how long this connection will last. The company are still looking for a new artistic director, and though they can survive for a while on the legacy of their founder Darrell, their future is up for grabs.

Martin Kettle on the long-forgotten greatness of Paul Robeson, a red-loving thorn in the side of white America

Long journey from triumph to tragedy

ALONG with Louis Armstrong and Joe Louis, Paul Robeson was one of most famous black Americans of his tumultuous times. But whereas Satch and the Bomber each honed one skill supremely, Robeson was a gifted athlete, singer, linguist, actor and political activist. And while all three men could be be described as role models for their downtrodden people, only Robeson appeared as a role model for all people, whatever their colour.

When Armstrong died in 1971, to be followed by Louis in 1981, each was rightly mourned as an American hero. Yet when Robeson died in 1976 few United States flags were waved at his Harlem funeral. For Robeson had become a pariah and had drifted into obscurity, where he has remained ever since. In this his centenary year, if he is remembered at all, it is mainly as the man who sang "Old Man River" in the film of Show Boat, one of a number of Hollywood movies he was later to repudiate as racially demeaning.

Yet "Old Man River" isn't the half or even the hundredth part of Paul Robeson's claim to fame, even though the song became his calling card. Robeson's achievements were dazzlingly diverse and rich, and underpinning them all was the greatest of his achievements — himself. When people met, saw or heard Robeson, it was his presence, the totality of his art and his humanity, that overwhelmed them. That these qualities were embodied in the son of a runaway black American slave gave Robeson an historic mystique that was probably unequalled by any other human being of his lifetime. Yet that mystique ultimately became a burden, and that burden helped to break him.

Today Robeson stands on the verge of a partial rehabilitation and a modest renaissance. He was born in New Jersey on April 9, 1898, and the centenary has sparked renewed interest in his life, with conferences, lectures and showings of his films. Robeson's records are more widely available on CD than ever — he was given a posthumous lifetime achievement award at this year's Grammys. His only recent stumble was the decision of the US postal service not to commemorate him with a centenary stamp. It chose Tweety Pie and Sylvester instead.



That refusal, though, is an appropriate echo of the attitudes Robeson faced all through his life. In the latter part of it he was transformed into an unperson — or at least an un-American person — because of his lethal mix of black militancy and communist sympathies. His support of the Soviet Union at the height of the cold war made him one of the FBI's and Senator Joe McCarthy's principal targets. His work was blacklisted and his passport was taken away from him. As the country's most prominent black man and its most celebrated defender of the Soviet Union, Robeson had to withstand more harassment and hostility from the American state than any other individual this century, with the possible exception of Martin Luther King.

In 1949 Robeson told a conference in Paris: "It is unthinkable that American negroes could go to war, on behalf of those who have oppressed them for generations, against the Soviet Union, which in one generation has raised our people to full human dignity." The speech caused a sensation, a forerunner of the furore that followed Muhammad Ali's refusal to fight in Vietnam a generation later and his comment that "No Vietcong ever called me nigger". It also triggered one of the ugliest riots in mid-20th century America, at Peekskill in New York state. As a result of events such as these, Robeson became a holy martyr on the left, and an object of hate and contempt on the right.

This polarisation was particularly marked in the US. Back in 1939 Robeson had been so much of a national figure that his radio broadcast of "Ballad for Americans" — with its stirring anti-racist but intensely patriotic lyrics — became a bestseller. Within 10 years he was a top target of McCarthy's Un-American Activities witch-hunt. With the onset of the cold war, Robeson's politics — which are embodied in his 1958 book Here I Stand — effectively led to the end of his mainstream musical and theatrical careers in the US.

This was less true in Britain, where Robeson spent large periods of his life. But in 1961 he suffered a mental and physical breakdown.

That collapse, marked by a mysterious suicide attempt in Moscow, ushered in Robeson's declining years, which were spent in London and, following his final return to the US in 1964, New York and Philadelphia. The cause of his breakdown remains much disputed. Some say he was the victim of a CIA poisoning or the long arm of his inveterate enemy J Edgar Hoover; others, that it was brought on by the realisation of how catastrophically the Soviet Union, in which he had placed such faith, had failed. Some blame the strain of the long years of harassment in the fifties; others, the difficulties of a long and often strained marriage.

Whichever version is correct, Robeson's life was a long journey from triumph to tragedy. His early history had been remarkable. He was only the third black student to be admitted to Rutgers university and survived brutal attacks by his white teammates to become the dominant college American football player of his era. He took a law degree from Columbia and was an immensely accomplished linguist. Any one of these achievements marked him out as special, and when his college classmates speculated in 1919 about where he would be in 1940, they decided he would be "the leader of the coloured race in America".

When 1940 came that prediction had turned out to be more or less true, but in the intervening years Robeson had developed a multifarious career as a concert singer, a stage actor, a film star, an international celebrity and, increasingly, as a frontline leftwing political activist.

HE SUNG for the Prince of Wales, the Welsh miners and the International Brigade in the Spanish civil war. Gershwin had written the role of Porgy with him in mind — though Robeson never performed it — and Sergei Eisenstein planned for him to star in a film about the rebel slave leader Toussaint l'Ouverture. He was a friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, James Joyce and Jomo Kenyatta.

In London Robeson played Othello opposite 22-year-old Peggy Ashcroft's Desdemona, and the two became lovers, though the production could not travel to New York because American producers would not accept a black man kissing a white woman.

During the thirties Robeson had become increasingly interested in Africa, studying East and West African languages, and beginning a doctorate at London university's School of Oriental and African Studies (another uncompleted project). He travelled to Egypt, where he planned to make a movie with the legendary Om Kalsoun, and talked of going to Nigeria to learn "some pure African music". Asked by a journalist why he didn't go and live in a village in the Congo, Robeson replied: "Why not? They are my own people, and I would be on my native soil. Among white men I am always lonely."

The backbone of Robeson's fame, though, was always his rich, instantly recognisable bass voice, and the core of his repertoire was what was then known as the negro spiritual. Songs like "Deep River", "Water Boy", "Lazy Bones", "Steal Away" and "Go Down, Moses" were regulars on his programmes, along with "Old Man River" and "Summertime". Robeson often added "folk music" from other parts of the world, and in later years he sang very political songs too. But he was above all a black American artist who performed black American music.

As an actor Robeson was well known for the roles of Eugene O'Neill's Emperor Jones and Shakespeare's Othello. But the constraints upon black actors — then often confined to Uncle Toms, big-eyed simpletons or savages — limited his film career.

Assessments of Robeson tend to split along political lines. On the left, his promiscuous private life, his absenteeism as a parent, his mental illness, and above all his political naivety (to put it mildly) are consistently ignored in favour of the noble, heroic and incorruptible Robeson. On the right, his achievements and struggles are belittled, and his fame and greatness concealed. Now, perhaps, it is at last possible to see Robeson in a less partisan light. But see him we must.

In the New York Times recently an admirer called him "the quintessential genius of American history". Paul Von Blum, who teaches a course on Robeson at the Centre for African-American Studies at the University of California, calls him "the most multi-faceted talent in American history. You look at his career as a scholar, actor in film and theatre, concert singer, athlete, advocate for his people. It's an amazing legacy. But the vast majority of students who take my course have never heard of him."



Paul Robeson at the McCarthy hearings and (below) as Othello playing opposite Peggy Ashcroft's Desdemona

Eureka! Flikaball!

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

ONE night in the pub, Leon said: "Why can't we get a marble and put, like, a pop star in it?" Most things that happen to The Unlikely Lads (Modern Times, BBC2) seem to happen in the pub. Black eyes, broken ankles, bright ideas.

Vaughan thought, "That's bloody brilliant!" At two o'clock in the morning, he sat up in bed and shouted: "The bloody Premier League!"

And that, kiddies, is how the Gingell brothers from Newcastle re-invented marbles with pictures of football players inside them. Flikaball was going to make them millionaires. It was as if the dark brew of the lads' life suddenly took on a high, shining head of bubbles.

Vaughan said: "This is going to be massive. I reckon it's going to be the biggest game in the world. There's girls getting employed because of it. There's overtime because of it. If this takes off huge, it's brilliant. If it doesn't, I've left my mark. I've been there. I've done it. And I've made it. And it was mine. And I'm proud." You looked at Vaughan with speculative interest like Professor Higgins listening to Alfred Doolittle ("Pickering, this chap has a certain natural gift of rhetoric. Observe the rhythm of his native woodnotes wild. That's the Welsh strain in him"). Doolittle, you remember, did become a millionaire and never smiled again.

There was talk of $5.5 million in the first year of a world launch. Leon and Vaughan appeared on small TV shows. They test-drove Porsches. Their wide smiles seemed hooked over their ears.

Leon said: "I canna see it failing. Everybody canna see it failing. It will not fail. It's too good." And, with one of those laughs they use for punctuation, "I hope". He used to be the singer in a band that failed. Vaughan fits burglar alarms but always, as he said, "with something going on at the back of me mind to take away the blankness and boredom. Our dreams are our souls."

Flikaball launched last April. And then all the smiling stopped. The entrepreneur said: "Everything went like clockwork." Don't say any more, entrepreneur. I know how everything-went-like-clockwork ends.

Packets of unsold Flikaballs hung in the shops, swinging in the draught. Now I come to think about it, I have never seen a boy playing marbles. Never seen a boy on his knees on the pavement.

Vaughan stood on the Tyne and watched his ship going out.

It was Daniel Reed, the director, who really hit the jackpot. Candid and cheerful, the lads seemed to rollick through life on a swagger and a laugh. As confident as children before the camera and as transparent as their own creation.

They have such faith in each other. Leon said: "Vaughan could be drinking a bottle of pop and he'd redesign the pop bottle. He wouldn't be thinking, 'This is a lovely drink of pop, this.' He'd be thinking, 'Hang on, how can I make this bottle better?'."

Vaughan said: "Leon's wasted. He should be on $250,000 a year down in London."

They have this new idea for a ball on a string which boys could kick on their way to school. "If you didn't have your little dream," said Leon, "you'd have nowt."

Paperbacks

Desmond Christy

The New Cambridge Shakespeare: King Edward III, edited by Giorgio Melchiori (Cambridge, £6.95)

KNOWN in the trade as a "doubtful play", Edward III slips back into the canon (it appeared in a 1877 edition of Shakespeare's plays). Soaps and films get written by groups of writers. So, it seems, did many Elizabethan plays. A plotter would mine the sources — in this case Holinshed, Froissart and William Painter's The Palace Of Pleasure — and divers hands would set to work. Perhaps Will Shakespeare might knock off a few scenes? The one where Edward — who must be taught to control his passions and not abuse his sovereign power — tries to seduce the Countess of Salisbury, perhaps. Or the one in which the poet Lodowick is dragged in to abuse his talents by writing lines that might disarm the virtuous countess? The theme of the play, which is wrapped up in the period's attempt to revive chivalric values, is the education of princes — a Prince Edward, in particular — but what interests the modern reader most is how, beneath the royal propaganda, Shakespeare sniffs out all the ideological ambiguities and cruelties of kings. But why, if Shakespeare wrote so much of Edward III, was his hand in it forgotten? Perhaps because the Countess of Salisbury gives the Scots such a hard time. Will would not have wanted James I to discover that the author of the king-pleasing Macbeth also wrote Edward III.

The Hacienda: My Venezuelan Years, by Lisa St Aubin de Terán (Virago, £6.99)

A SCHOOLGIRL, who should be sitting her Cambridge entrance exams, is carried away to the Andes by an aristocrat and bank robber. To the impoverished plantation workers she was "la doña", wife of the master and hardly to be spoken to. Her husband virtually abandons her and things get scarier with every page you turn. A life even more gripping than her own novels.

The Complete Eurovision Song Contest Companion, by Paul Gambaccini, Tim Rice, Jonathan Rice and Tony Brown (Pavilion, £9.99)

THE Eurovision Wisden, although among all the tables there is no room for the lyrics of the songs. And, as if there were not enough authors already, you get a foreword by Terry Wogan, who even in print writes, "Aha, I can hear you cry . . .". Hang on a minute, I've got the lyrics of next year's winning entry: "Aha, I can hear you cry, can hear you cry, can hear you cry, Aha!" Nul points.



Bainbridge focuses her fierce intelligence on a fictionalised account of the Crimean war PHOTO: JOHN REARDON

Short, sharp flick of the pen

Anne Chisholm

Master Georgie
by Beryl Bainbridge
Duckworth 190pp £14.99

IN HER early books, as she has acknowledged more directly than most novelists care to do, Beryl Bainbridge wrote out of her family history and the people and places she knew. Then, with her most recent novels, The Birthday Boys and Every Man For Himself, she moved further back in time, plumbing not just her memory but the collective memory of her generation, raised on the historical legends of the 19th and early 20th century.

Her fierce intelligence was set alight by the story of Scott of the Antarctic and then by the Titanic; now, in a new and equally marvellous book, she has chosen to imagine an earlier national psychodrama, the Crimean war.

She avoids direct dealings with the two most celebrated Crimean war images, Florence Nightingale and the Charge of the Light Brigade, although both hover around her pages: cholera is a more fearful enemy than the Russian troops, and one character acquires a new mount from among the 200 stampeding horses of the Light Brigade, "their riders having perished in a charge along the north valley". No writer knows better than Bainbridge how to release the power of historical incident with such sharp, delicate flicks of the pen.

In this book Bainbridge, always the least padded or self-indulgent of writers, is at her most elliptical and economic. It is very short, with fewer than 200 small pages, and she has constructed it around six photographic images and three narrative voices. Each photograph freezes a moment in the story, which begins and ends with a death: the first in a brothel in Liverpool, the last on the battlefield of Inkerman. Not for the first time, Bainbridge's true subjects are love and mortality, the dark intricacies of sexual passion and "grim-grinning death", the only victor in the end on every battlefield.

The power of love is embodied in Myrtle, a young girl named after the orphanage from which she was taken as an act of charity by the Hardys, a prosperous Liverpudlian family. Myrtle's memory is blank and she prefers it that way, although Georgie, the son of the house on whom she fastens all her hopes and dreams, tells her she could probably reclaim it if she tried: ". . . the memories might come back, like the images that reared up on his photogenic plates".

When Georgie's father dies in bed with a whore, both Myrtle and a passing urchin, Pompey Jones, are caught up in Georgie's conspiracy to hide the squalid truth, and both of them thereby acquire a hold over the family they appear to serve. Pompey, known to Myrtle as the "duck boy" after she sees him play a trick involving a duck in a basket, is an opportunist and a survivor who turns from Punch and Judy shows and fire-eating to photography and assisting Georgie, a medical student, with experiments in vivisection. But Pompey's tricks have nasty consequences and whenever he appears death is not far behind.

Along with Dr Potter, a geologist and scholar, Georgie's brother-in-law and the third voice in the book, Myrtle and Pompey arrive in the Crimea with Georgie and his family on the eve of war.

It is the measure of Bainbridge's power that this unlikely expedition seems entirely plausible. Georgie volunteers as a doctor. As cholera and war creep closer, the other women and children return home but Myrtle refuses to leave. Potter, against his better judgment, stays too.

She also knows how to spring surprises. It emerges that Myrtle's seemingly innocent love for Master Georgie had made her his sexual prey: with his barren wife's collusion, she has borne their two children. Pompey has been Georgie's occasional lover; the dedicated doctor and paterfamilias is not what he seems.

This novel requires concentration and rereading. Bainbridge's genius is demanding and her need to tease readers is at its most pronounced, but her control of her material and her dazzling skill have never been more apparent. This may be her most ambitious and brilliantly realised book yet.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £13 contact CultureShop

Stepping beyond the silver screen

J G Ballard

Beneath Mulholland:
Thoughts on Hollywood and Its Ghosts
by David Thomson
Little Brown 300pp £20

WHEN the devil takes you up to a high place at the end of the century and offers you all the kingdoms of the earth, you may well find yourself on Mulholland Drive. Climb the steep slopes of Laurel Canyon in your hired car and stop when you reach the road that runs along the crest of the Santa Monica Mountains. Try to ignore the nearby houses of Jack Nicholson and David Hockney, and recognise that you stand on the psychic watershed that separates two of the strangest man-made ecologies of our age.

To the north lies the San Fernando Valley, the dead lands of Burbank and Sherman Oaks, hell on earth to social historians but a powerful magnet for most of the people on this planet, who long to be part of its suburban dream.

The agency responsible for transforming this endless terrain of tract housing, small airports and TV stations into some of the most potent real estate in the collective unconscious lies behind you, in the fantasy mills of Hollywood. For some reason, which neuroscientists may one day explain, the Hollywood film seems to endow with magic almost anything it touches, and easily ensnares even the most astute minds, as David Thomson shows in this hugely entertaining collection of essays and tales.

The ordeals of tired housewives in shabby apartments and bored drifters marooned at dusty filling stations, which would drive us out of our minds if filmed by David Lean or Richard Attenborough, become almost Homeric sagas in the eye of the Hollywood lens, turning the San Fernando Valley into a plain of drama and mystery.

According to a poem by Nabokov, Hollywood buried its bodies below Mulholland Drive, the ghosts of forgotten film stars and dreams that faded when the development money ran out. But their spectres fly at dusk, and positively blaze through Thomson's imagination. Long-dead film actors and melodramas that apparently ended with the final credits come back to rework themselves into Thomson's lucid dreams.

Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray avoid the gas chamber after Double Indemnity, and later commit suicide on an ocean cruise, burdened by their guilty memories. James Dean survives his car crash and goes on to marry Liz Taylor, stars in Chinatown and takes the wheel from Teddy Kennedy in the Chappaquiddick death-car.

Replayed against the silver screen inside Thomson's head, these fantasies seem even more real than their originals. But were their originals ever real in the first place? Thomson, born in London in 1941, saw his first film at the age of five, and in many ways has remained in his seat in the stalls ever since.

For me, he is the greatest of today's film writers, author of the rightly acclaimed Biographical Dictionary Of Film, one of the best film books ever written and full of quirky and unexpected judgments that linger annoyingly in the mind, like his belief that Cary Grant is the supreme film actor. In his introduction to Beneath Mulholland, he says of Suspects, his celebrated book of "after-tales", that it was prompted by his sense that in the best movies there is always a further story itching to be uncovered. Exactly what did happen to Steve McQueen and Ali MacGraw in Mexico after The Getaway? As for Lee Marvin in Point Blank, did he simply fade back into his dream of death?

Most films last as long as a lunch, preciously little time to create a completely self-contained world. In a sense Thomson's career has been devoted to filling in these empty dramatic spaces, the hints of darker possibilities that hover in the side corridors of even the tightest dramas. Beneath Mulholland is an imaginary film studio, a vast cutting-room where Thomson can splice and remix to his heart's content.

In many ways Thomson is the last film fan, just old enough to have seen a large part of Hollywood's output when it was first released. But his criticism is untouched by any over-sweet nostalgia. He is unsentimental about the realities of Hollywood. "The script," he says, "is the literary form for a society giving up literacy."

Thomson deplores the advent of special effects and the clear implication that the traditional *raison d'être* of film, the magic of even the most mundane of invented worlds, no longer works. "No one," he says, "believes in a picture for the story it tells."

Is the Hollywood film about to abandon its past and become a large-screen version of the video arcade, with restless teenagers slamming the interactive buttons on their seats and steering Bruce Willis towards this or that villain? But I'm confident that the people south of Mulholland can still surprise us, and that Thomson will never find himself sitting alone in a deserted movie theatre as the lights come up for the last time.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £16 contact CultureShop

Nature on the rack

John Vidal

Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature
by Linda Lear
Allen Lane/The Penguin Press
634pp £25

Silent Spring
by Rachel Carson
Penguin 320pp £7.99

WHEN Rachel Carson published Silent Spring in 1962 the United States chemical industry, the press, academia, and many eminent politicians and scientists turned vile and pustulous. Her critique of the widespread misuse of poisonous chemicals was interpreted as a kick in the groin of Western progress.

This mild-mannered, apolitical middle-aged woman who had spent a virtuous life peering into rock pools, writing occasional magazine pieces and editing government tracts became overnight an establishment she-devil. Carson was accused of being a communist, of being emotional and using scare tactics. She was "biased", "amateur" and "had abandoned science".

She was none of these, but the ideologues, the scientific establishment and the industry spokesmen queued up to vilify her. Silent Spring was described as "more poisonous than the chemicals she attacked", and Carson was dismissed as fanatical. The industry mounted a massive PR campaign. The US, it was said, would collapse without its chemical industry and Carson was accused of putting the free world at risk of hunger and disease. The more they protested, the more the public understood Carson's case that the chemical industry was effectively out of control.

As her meticulous biographer, Linda Lear, notes, Carson exposed two raw nerves. By deliberately using the rhetoric of the cold war to persuade readers of the urgency of the message, she forced industrialists into a debate they neither wanted nor expected. While there was nothing scientifically new in what she wrote about the interconnectedness of nature, her tone and sharpness were luminous. Silent Spring led directly to what is today

The second was gender. Silent Spring was one of the first social critiques of modern industrial behaviour and Carson was in all ways an outsider. Her vision included past and future generations, other species and unquantifiables. Life was not all arrow-straight modernity, as industry, governments and scientists would have it, but full of messy human values and sensitivity. While she never linked the lot of postwar Western women with that of nature, others did and the early US feminists took great courage from her stance.

But was she a saint, as Lear would seem to make her in this exhaustive hagiography that is swamped at times with tedious circumstantial detail of a life that only became really interesting near the end? Vulnerable and conscientious, yes. Passionate and determined, of course. But two good non-fiction works and a few magazine pieces do not warrant uncritical adulation for her writing.

Happily Penguin has reissued Silent Spring to coincide with Lear's welcome biography and the two are best read together. There is barely a sentence of the original that does not apply today, but the pity is that no one has been commissioned to write a new introduction to consider Carson's legacy.

Carson, who was dying of cancer even as Silent Spring was being published, would be reaching for her typewriter. For all the clamour of environmentalism and all the weasel words of governments, the situation is no better.

poisoning communities and farmworkers. Great swathes of farmland are little more than ecological deserts, bird numbers are declining everywhere, almost every river in Britain is poisoned with man-made chemicals, cancer mysteriously afflicts almost one in three people in industrial societies and, looming, we have the headlong rush into the unknowns of genetic engineering.

Moreover, the chemical industry, more powerful than ever, uses precisely the same techniques and language to destroy and discredit its critics today. It's all very depressing, but we must trust that people will listen to the other brave Carsons who are emerging.

Milan's mysteries

Laura Cumming

Identity
by Milan Kundera
Faber 153pp £12.99

MILAN Kundera's new novel opens in a French seaside town, out of season. Two lovers have an assignation at the hotel. The woman arrives the night before, suffers a nightmare and goes out for a walk in the morning. The man searches for her on the beach, a margin of bleached sand bordered by a long sea-wall. The atmosphere is doleful and tense. It could be the start of a novel by Marguerite Duras.

Spying his lover on the shoreline about to be crushed by a sand-yacht, Jean-Marc rushes forward with tears in his eyes. The figure turns towards him. "The woman he had thought was Chantal became old, ugly, pathetically other." Mistaking his lover's identity, Jean-Marc suddenly doubts his own. The crisis is existential. It could be a scene from a novel by Camus.

Kundera is now technically French himself. He emigrated from Prague more than 20 years ago, is a French national and writes in French. Yet the France of this novel is deliberately derived from literature. Every scene seems curiously familiar — the characters discuss religion and death over red wine, like intellectuals in Sartre or De Beauvoir. The mute misconnection between the lovers has been Duras's constant theme. What Kundera evokes is the persistent, hallucinatory sense of *déjà vu* in the reader, the feeling that we may have been here before.

In her nightmare Chantal dreamt of a miserable early marriage. When Jean-Marc finally meets up with her, she is still affected by memories of which he knows nothing. Instead, she accounts for her sadness by saying that men have ceased to admire her on the street. Moved, Jean-Marc begins to send Chantal anonymous love letters, signed only CDB.

Rather than boast about these billets-doux, Chantal hides them in her underwear drawer. Suspecting that she conceals them in hope of some tryst with this secret admirer, Jean-Marc becomes the jealous cuckold of his own tender prank.

Kundera transforms this fragment of French farce into a penetrating meditation on the mystery of identity. Are we as we seem to those who know us best — or a cache of selves secreted in some private drawer? Can we be identified through our faces, our handwriting, our history? What if these can be as easily mistaken as they are by Jean-Marc and Chantal? Is our identity a continuum or a series of personae that change with the blink of an eye? Kundera keeps these questions hovering in the air like hummingbirds. Jean-Marc has often perceived the way that Chantal's expression, indeed her whole character, seems to change inside the advertising company where she works. She has no patience with his anxiety, knowing that disguise is the best uniform for the office. But when she goes on a business trip to London, Chantal is literally taken for someone else.

By now you have realised that Kundera's characters may not be quite as typically French as they seem. The head of the advertising agency, a former Trotskyite who cribs the slogans of the sixties to sell disposable nappies, keeps his staff in rigid thrall like a Soviet commissar. At some point Kundera's narrative has gone down a rabbit hole and emerged in another fictional country altogether.

John Updike once observed of Kundera that he was a child of the Enlightenment, for whom mystery occurred only on the sexual or psychological plane. Certainly, Identity has no more numinous content than any of Kundera's earlier novels. But it does celebrate a human kind of mystery, a poignant faith in the heart over the head. Chantal's identity may be mutable, but her essence is what Jean-Marc must continue to love.



Milan Kundera . . . problems of identity

As bad as he gets

Philip Horne

Jack Nicholson: The Life and Times of an Actor on the Edge
by Peter Thompson
Mainstream Publishing 304pp £15.99

HOW do we "know", or think we know, or how does Peter Thompson think he knows, that starlet Amanda de Cadenet, 21, actually had an affair with megastar Jack Nicholson, 57, in London in the summer of 1994? She stated publicly that "There's nothing going on". The ex-editor of the Sunday Mirror informs us, however, that privately she "admitted the affair" in a letter to her estranged husband, John Taylor, bassist of Duran Duran. "The rock star promptly consigned her confession to a trashcan, whence it was retrieved by an eager member of the LA paparazzi."

This is the world of tabloid "sleaze", all right, in its apotheosis as star biography, and Peter Thompson, veteran chronicler of Robert Maxwell, Sarah Ferguson and Princess Diana, has waded through it with a more than Boswellian devotion, in order to bring us his bulletin from the world of Hollywood's currently most honoured actor.

Nicholson is a close supporter of President Clinton, but unlike his country's leader has never troubled to deny having inhaled, or even snorted, nor gone far out of his way to quash stories about the ups and downs of his zipper. But then, his is a brand name signifying sex and dangerous fun, and the consistency of his platform over the decades gives it the kind of paradoxical respectability that last Oscar reconfirms.

The man who became a star with Easy Rider is perhaps the most seductive surviving representative of the 1960s, or at least of some of its fantasies, and his Byronic policy of non-hypocrisy, of open avowal and grinning, sociable irresponsibility, disarms most critics. Moreover, his generation, often his friends, are now in charge of the Hollywood asylum, and he can hardly claim any longer to be "at odds with the establishment".

This book reminds you quite how many of Nicholson's early starring roles were what one may call sexual parts, associated with the "sexual revolution". And from Five Easy Pieces (1970) onwards, a film written and directed by friends, Nicholson has had parts written to fit him.

Correspondingly, he is said to bring his work home, so that for instance during the Mafia black comedy Prizzi's Honour (1985) his then companion Anjelica Huston said she found "too much of the hitman in him when he came home". Once so much feedback has got into the system, and the actor's life has become both a commodity and a medium of publicity, we start to see the showbiz cliché of the hall of mirrors.

The dirt Thompson dredges through — the illegitimacy revelation (that Nicholson's "sister" was really his mother), the Roman Polanski rape case, the associations with Heidi Fleiss and other unsavouries, the paternity suits — strongly suggest some excessive costs in the pact Nicholson, who calls himself "Dr Devil", seems to have made.

Part of the cost is tabloid headlines and books like Thompson's, though it is less philistine about the films than one might expect. The most painful thing to contemplate here, however, is perhaps Nicholson's artistic loss of the "Edge" in Thompson's title.

Safety net for falling stones

Mark Cocker

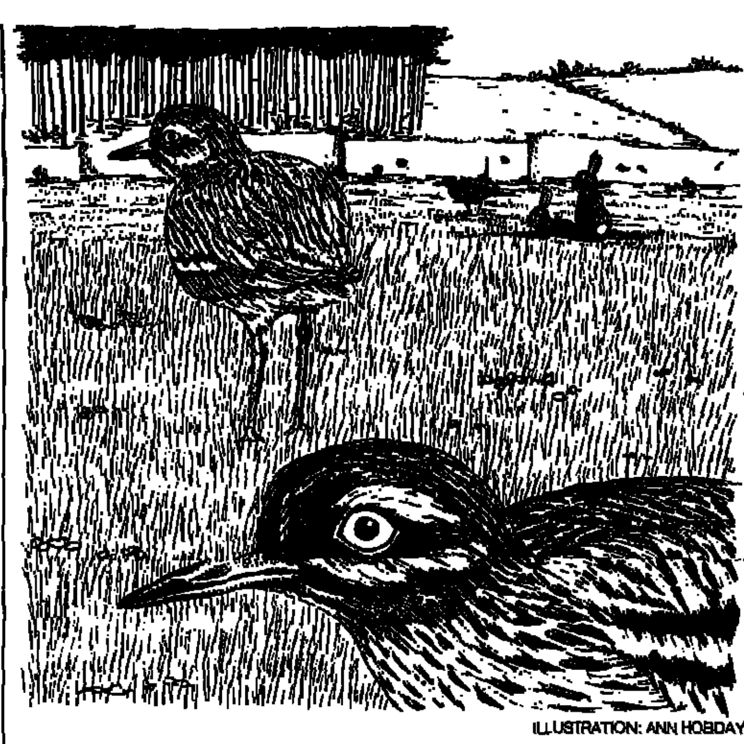


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

STONE CURLEWS? No problem, the warden reassured us. Go to the hide, look out to the right and; they were there just two minutes ago. Stone curlews have probably been breeding for thousands of years at Weeting Heath in Norfolk's Breckland, but visiting the beautiful reserve brings no guarantee of observing this elusive creature. One famous British ornithologist, T A Coward, once wrote that "from egg onward, the life of the stone curlew is spent in hiding itself from view".

For five minutes we scanned the heath where there hardly seemed to be a twig or pebble to hide a tall partridge-sized creature. It was only when one of them moved fractionally that we seized our chance. It was then a matter of adjusting perspective until a dense streed of streaks on the upperparts slowly, almost magically, emerged from the indeterminate background, coalescing into a bird's unmistakable form.

From there we found its partner close by, and after that, although our attention wandered as we enjoyed the other creatures on this drizzly afternoon — the lapwings in looping displays or the skylarks ascending in song flights — we could always find the stone curlew. But for a whole hour, until we left them finally to the spring rain and the endless song, they never moved again, not once.

The stone curlew must be one of Britain's strangest birds. Even the names by which it has been known suggest an elusive character. To scientists it is *Burhinus oedicnemus* — literally the "bull-nosed swollen shin", which refers to its stubby bill and thick legs.

In Africa the Dutch settlers were more struck by another feature: to them it was the dikkop, the thick head. Although we now call it stone curlew, it's not a curlew at all. In the past, in East Anglia, it was known more simply as the Norfolk plover or stone plover or, bizarrely, the goggle-eyed plover. But it is not a plover either.

However it is goggle-eyed. Thick-knees (the true family name) have cold, menacing yellow irises that provide a clue to their unusual crepuscular lifestyle. At dusk they really come alive, when they mark the onset of darkness with their plaintive wailing calls. At one time the extent of Breckland could have been mapped by that eerie sound, the birds loved its tightly grazed rabbit warrens and sheep walks or the short-lived agriculture plots (literally "break" or "breck-land" — hence the region's name).

This century, however, the conversion of Breckland's heath pasture to intensive arable farming and the planting of Britain's largest lowland conifer forest have caused a steep decline in the number of stone curlews. Sadly there are only 120 pairs today, but sadder still, this represents almost two-thirds of Britain's entire stone curlew colony. And the real tragedy is that the pattern is repeated in 14 other European countries.

The one piece of good news is that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has been running a scheme for a number of years, both in Breckland and the bird's other English stronghold, Salisbury Plain. This has achieved a national 5 per cent increase every year and reversed a century-long downward trend.

The scheme involves locating every single nest, marking it, liaising closely with highly co-operative landowners and moving the eggs or young during as many agricultural procedures as they can cover. It involves six people working all summer and costs about $200,000 a year. The fact that the bird's fortunes now depend on such an intensive programme says much about the juggernaut inflexibility of modern agriculture, but at least it ensures that this Houdini of birds doesn't vanish altogether.

Chess Leonard Barden

MATTHEW SADLER, the 23-year-old British No 2, has been competing at the select Amber invitation match in Monaco with its unique format of rapid and blindfold chess. The GMs play one rapid and one blindfold game against each opponent, with a prize fund of $130,000 distributed for combined performance and between the two sections.

Despite facing Karpov, Anand and Kramnik, Sadler was among the leaders in the rapid section, but disaster seemed imminent when he lost his first seven blindfold games. Then this happened:

Karpov v Sadler (bf)

[illegible] **Nb4 Be4 5 f3 Bg6 6 Nxg6 hxg6 7 Bg2 Qd6 8 f4 0-0-0 9 c3 g5 10 Qd3 Kb8 11 fxg5 e5 12 0-0 e4 13 Rxf7?? exd3** and shamefaced Karpov resigned. It was one of the quickest defeats of his career.

Anand, the most successful GM at Monaco in the past two years, was out of form, losing a miniature based on the winner's computer homework:

Shirov v Anand

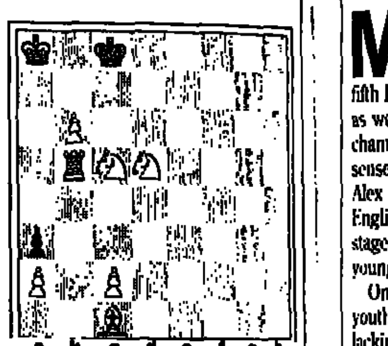
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 e6 7 Qd2 Be7 8 0-0-0 Nxd4 9 Qxd4 0-0 10 f4 Qa5 11 Kb1 11 Bc4 is currently favoured, but Shirov plans to attack Black's weak g7 and h7.

Rd8 Black would like to advance e5, but then (with the WK at b1 rather than c1) 12 Qd2 threatens the trick 13 Nd5 Qxd2 14 Nxe7+.

12 h4 Bd7 13 Bd3 h6 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 Bc6 16 Qe3! This queen retreat was previously underestimated. **Rxd3** It's essential to eliminate an attacker. If hxg5 17 hxg5 Nd5 18 Rh8+ Kxh8 19 Qh3+, 20 Qh7+ and 21 Qh8 mate.

17 Rxd3 hxg5 18 hxg5 Bxg2 Guarding h3, so apparently gaining a vital tempo. **19 gxf6 Bxh1 20 Qg1!** The killer which had to be prepared in advance. The end would be 20 ... Bf8 21 Rg3 g6 22 Rxg6+ fxg6 23 Qxg6+ Kh8 24 f7 when if Bg7 25 Qh5+ or Bc5 25 Qh6 mate, while otherwise White mates by Qg8.

No 2519



This week's puzzle may sound alarming: a series-helpmate in 24 moves by N Sikdar (The Problemist, 1994). But this type of problem is like a whodunnit or a maze, where only a precise sequence solves the mystery. Black makes 24 successive moves, neither moving into nor delivering check, then White checkmates in one. It looks impossible for Black, with only a king and a pawn, to create such a position, but it can be done. The answer took me 20 minutes: see if you can do better.

No 2518: The obvious answer is BK on d3 and mate by 1 0-0-0, but this is a red herring. With White to play, the BK could not have reached d3 legally last move since it would have to emerge from an illegal double check at c4, d4, e4 or e3. However, it is legal for the BK to be at d3 if it is Black's move in the diagram, when the mate in one is 1 ... Qg1. The king can also be at e6 with White to move and mate by 1 Qb5. Full marks if you got both answers.

Quick crossword no. 414

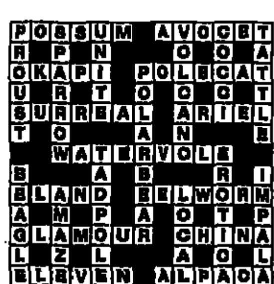
Across

1 Compulsive thief (12)
9 Tell — regularity (5)
10 Small creature, eg fish (7)
11 Hard growth on digit (4)
12 Ringing in the ears (8)
14 Pacific island (6)
15 Sufficient number for business (6)
18 Seller abroad (8)
20 Responsibility (4)
22 Hide (7)
23 Ancient British tribe (5)
24 Hep purgatory (anag) (5,7)

Down

2 (Men) behaving badly (7)
3 Leave your car (4)
4 Illicit soup? (6)
5 Afterthought (8)
6 Eyot (5)
7 Jack Horner's food (9,3)
8 Rallying place (5,3,4)
13 The Enterprise, for example (8)
16 Still waters do (3,4)
17 Look for (6)
19 Musical instrument (5)
21 Mendacious person (4)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

FOR centuries alchemists and philosophers have sought the secret of eternal youth, but they need look no further than the bridge table. My New York rubber bridge game is graced by the presence of Boris Koytchou — a cultured bon viveur and ladies' man at the age of 80! Though Russian by birth, he has represented the United States at international level, and he still plays the cards as well as the best in the world. Take the South cards, and see if you can match his skill. Game all, dealer West:

North
♠ AQ1096
♥ K64
♦ 10
♣ A743

South
♠ 5
♥ A103
♦ Q984
♣ KQ985

This has been the bidding (see above right):

West's double of two clubs was for takeout, implying length in diamonds and hearts. North's jump to four diamonds showed a singleton diamond and club support. Four no trumps was Roman Key Card Blackwood, a popular convention in expert circles, and five spades showed two "aces" (the king of trumps counting as an ace) and the queen of trumps. All great stuff, but it will be completely useless if you don't make the contract! West leads the king of diamonds, and switches to the four of spades. Play on.

South	West	North	East
	1♦	1♠	Pass
2♣	Dble	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4 NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Koytchou finessed dummy's queen of spades and the second trick, then cashed the ace of spades, discarding a heart. He ruffed a spade, on which West dropped the king, then led the queen of diamonds from his hand, covered by the king and ruffed in dummy. A heart to the ace was followed by the nine of diamonds, in turn covered by the jack and ruffed in dummy, establishing declarer's eight as a master. All that remained was to draw trumps.

But Koytchou was alive to the danger of the actual 4-0 trump break — West's vulnerable double was based on few high cards, so it was very likely to be based on acute club shortage.

North
♠ AQ1096
♥ K64
♦ 10
♣ A743

West
♠ KJ84
♥ QJ92
♦ AKJ76
♣ None

East
♠ 732
♥ 873
♦ 532
♣ J1062

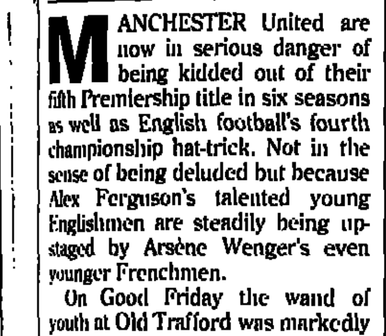
South
♠ 5
♥ A103
♦ Q984
♣ KQ985

Backing his judgment, Koytchou continued with a fourth round of spades from the table. East threw a heart, so Koytchou ruffed with the eight of clubs. He played a heart to the king and another heart from the table. East, down to J1062 of trumps, did the best he could by ruffing with the ten — but Koytchou overruffed with the queen, ruffed his master diamond with dummy's ace of trumps, and claimed the last two tricks with the Q9 of clubs over East's 106. What it is to be young! ©

Football Premiership: Arsenal 3 Newcastle United 1

Salad days with French dressing

David Lacey



MANCHESTER United are now in serious danger of being kidded out of their fifth Premiership title in six seasons as well as English football's fourth championship hat-trick. Not in the sense of being deluded but because Alex Ferguson's talented young Englishmen are steadily being upstaged by Arsène Wenger's even younger Frenchmen.

On Good Friday the wand of youth at Old Trafford was markedly lacking in magical properties as United were held to 1-1 by a Liverpool team reduced to 10 men by the dismissal of Michael Owen. A day later Highbury's *jeux d'enfants* saw Arsenal frolic to a 3-1 victory over Newcastle United, which slimmed the champions' lead at the top to four points. This was further reduced to a single point on Monday when Arsenal swept aside Blackburn 4-1 at Ewood Park — and Arsenal still have two games in hand.

At Highbury Newcastle lacked any serious attacking inclinations until they conceded a goal. As an appetiser for the FA Cup final their approach was about as fresh as a dodgy prawn cocktail. While a degree of caution was forgivable in a team who have won only two of their last 18 Premiership fixtures, Kenny Dalglish's tactics were dated. He played with six defenders and sandbagged his midfield, leaving Alan Shearer up front with John Barnes.

Had Arsenal still been hoisting long balls forward for Ian Wright to run on to there might have been some point to such a negative pattern but Wenger's team do not play this way, even when Wright is fit. Now when Arsenal use a long pass it is usually employed to switch a movement quickly from wing to wing, a common sight in French football.

At the start of the season Wenger's playing resources appeared slim beside those of Manchester United, but this is no longer the case. Against Newcastle, Arsenal were without Dennis Bergkamp, Wright, Martin Keown and Lee Dixon, and until recently a broken finger was denying them David Seaman in goal. But the confidence with which the Austrian Alex Manninger deputised for Seaman has clearly spread to Nicolas Anelka and Christopher Wreh, whose goals have maintained the momentum of Arsenal's pursuit of a second league and FA Cup double.

Last Saturday, Anelka scored twice, driving a shot into the far corner of the net after Wreh's strength in possession was followed by a touch-on from Emmanuel Petit that had found him in space; and then lunging in at the far post to meet Ray Parlour's low cross. Patrick Vieira fired in Arsenal's third from 30 yards after a weak clearance from Nikos Dabizas had gone straight to Marc Overmars, who then combined with Anelka to set up the chance.

At 21 the long-striding, perceptive Vieira has become the biggest single influence on Arsenal's season. Anelka, two years younger, may yet be the catalyst that tilts the honours their way. Certainly he is repaying Wenger's faith in his talents after a difficult introduction to English football. "I knew from the start of the season that we needed four strikers," explained Arsenal's manager, "but it is difficult to keep everybody happy.

"I knew Nicolas had the talent but when you are young you get impatient and it is not easy. You can never bring young players along if, every time you have a problem, you buy another player."

Gary Speed, signed by Dalglish for $9 million in February, is surely a case in point; at best a useful satellite, hardly a supernova. Soon after Arsenal had gone in front Speed headed a powerfully driven centre from Shearer over the bar.

Newcastle are still in danger of becoming the fifth club to reach an FA Cup final and be relegated. When Dalglish succeeded Kevin Keegan 15 months ago this was hardly the double St James' Park had in mind.



Un, deux, trois . . . Frenchman Anelka ready to celebrate the first of his two goals against Newcastle at Highbury. Compatriot Patrick Vieira claimed the third PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE EGERTON

Athletics

Runaway success

IN Highland snows and bitterly cold conditions, Paula Radcliffe, above, seized the crown so regally worn by Liz McColgan as the head of the British distance running since 1986 by setting a new world-best five miles at Balmoral Castle.

Radcliffe was a class apart from McColgan and Yvonne Murray, the Commonwealth 10,000m champion. After breaking away within less than a mile to go, she pressed on relentlessly to stop the clock at 24min 54sec. McColgan was second.

Radcliffe's time broke the world best of 25.09, set by the Kenyan Lornah Kiplagat last year. "I'm so absolutely delighted," she said.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Shipshape Bristol's double vision of promotion

THE prospect of Bristol having two football teams playing in the First Division next season moved a step closer when Bristol City won promotion — without kicking a ball. Grimsby, in third place in the Second Division, needed to win at Wycombe Wanderers to keep in touch with the runaway leaders, but they could only manage a 1-1 draw.

So now City can finish no worse than second. Meanwhile Bristol's other team, Rovers, defeated Wigan 5-0 to move within two points of the play-off places.

Doncaster Rovers players broke down in tears when their club's 75-year run in the Football League came to an end after a 2-1 defeat at Chester condemned the Yorkshire club to the Vauxhall Conference. Halifax look set to take their place in the Third Division.

In Scotland, First Division leaders Dundee will play in the Premier Division next season. Their 1-1 draw against Raith Rovers secured the First Division title.

WEST INDIES had the final say as England's last game of their Caribbean tour ended on a disappointing note. Hoping to restore some pride after losing the Test series 3-1 and trailing 3-1 in the one-day internationals, England were denied the consolation of a last-ditch victory when they were beaten by 57 runs in the fifth and final limited-overs game. Set a target of 303, the tourists quickly wilted in the heat of Port of Spain, Trinidad, losing wickets at regular intervals. They were all out for 245, with more than four overs to spare.

THE West Indies fast bowler, Nixon McLean, has joined Hampshire on a one-year contract as their overseas player this season, replacing Australia's Michael Kasprowicz, who has pulled out of his two-year deal on health grounds. The 24-year-old West Indian paceman played in two Tests and two one-day internationals against England during the winter, and was reputed to be the quickest bowler in the West Indies attack. Hampshire head coach Tim Tremlett said: "He will give an injection of pace to our attack."

AUSTRALIAN leg-spinner Shane Warne is expected to miss his country's trip to Sharjah this week after straining his bowling shoulder. Warne is believed to have suffered ligament damage when diving for a catch in the Tri-series win against Zimbabwe in New Delhi, and is expected to play in the final against India before returning home for treatment. He could be out of action for four months.

THE Jockey Club followed the example of the RSPCA in launching an inquiry into the deaths of five horses during this month's Grand National meeting at Aintree, Liverpool. Their spokesman, John Maxese, said: "We will be looking into the circumstances surrounding the deaths of three out of 37 runners in the Grand National." Two other horses, including One Man, one of the most popular chasers in Britain, were killed earlier at the three-day event.

BRITISH athletics was plunged into a fresh crisis when the shot-putter Paul Edwards was banned for life at a disciplinary hearing after being found guilty of failing his third drugs test in three years. But within minutes of being informed of the verdict against him for allegedly using testosterone, the body-building hormone, Edwards lodged an appeal and promised he would take his case to the High Court if he was not cleared. The move could further delay the winding-up of the British Athletic Federation, which went into insolvency in October with debts of more than $3.2 million. However, it cannot go into liquidation while legal action is being taken against it.

MANCHESTER boxer Wayne Rigby stopped Matt Brown to retain his British lightweight title in London. The challenger retired at the end of the eighth round and later said he was quitting the sport.

JOHN HIGGINS, Scotland's world No 2 snooker player, beat Stephen Hendry, fellow Scot and No 1 for the entire decade, 9-8, to win the $100,000 first prize in the British Open at Plymouth.

THE former Belgian world cycling champion Rudy Dhaenens died from injuries sustained in a car crash. Dhaenens, who was aged 36, claimed his only major victory in 1990 when he won the world title in Japan ahead of his Belgian teammate, Dirk De Wolf.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Blackburn 1, Arsenal 4; Derby Co 4, Bolton 0; Liverpool 2, Crystal Pal 1. Newcastle 2, Barnsley 1. Sheff Wed 1, West Ham 1; Tottenham 1, Coventry 1; Wimbledon 0, Everton 0.
Leading positions: 1, Man Utd (played 34-points 67); 2, Arsenal (32-66); 3, Liverpool (33-58)

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Bury 2, Bradford 0; Crewe 2, Stoke 0; Man City 0, Birmingham 1; Norwich 5, Huddersfield 0; Nottm For 3, Wolves 0; Portsmouth 0, Ipswich 1; Port Vale 0, Charlton 1; Reading 0, Middlesbro 1; Swindon 1, Sheff Utd 1; Tranmere 3, Stockport 0; WBA 3, Sunderland 3.
Leading positions: 1, Nottm Forest (43-89); 2, Sunderland (42-81); 3, Charlton (43-81)

Division Two: Blackpool 1, Brentford 2; Bristol City 1, Watford 1; Fulham 5, Carlisle 0, Grimsby 1, Bristol R 2; Millwall 1, Plymouth 1; Northampton 2, Preston 2; Oldham 0, Wycombe 1; Southend 0, Gillingham 0; Wigan 5, Burnley 1; Wrexham 1, York 2.
Leading positions: 1, Bristol City (43-82); 2, Watford (43-81); 3, Fulham (43-70).

Division Three: Brighton 1, Mansfield 1; Colchester 4; Darlington 1, Chester 0; Doncaster 1, Notts Co 2; Exeter 1, Cambridge 0; Hartlepool 1, Lincoln 1; Leyton O 2, Shrewsbry 3; Macclesfield 2, Barnet 0; Peterborough 2, Cardiff 0; Scarborough 0, Scunthorpe 0; Swansea 3, Rochdale 0; Torquay 1, Rotherham 2.
Leading positions: 1, Notts County (43-92); 2, Macclesfield (43-73); 3, Torquay (43-71).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Dundee U 0, Aberdeen 0; Hibernian 2, Hearts 1; Motherwell 1, Kilmarnock 1; Rangers 2, Celtic 0; St Johnstone 0, Dunfermline 0.
Leading positions: 1, Rangers (32-66); 2, Celtic (32-66); 3, Hearts (32-62).

First Division: Ayr 2, Hamilton 1; Falkirk 1, Stirling A 0; Morton 2, St Mirren 0; Partick 2, Airdrie 0; Raith 1, Dundee 1.
Leading positions: 1, Dundee (32-69); 2, Falkirk (32-58); 3, Raith (32-54).

Second Division: Brechin 1, Stranraer 3; Clydebank 0, Forfar 1; Clyde 0, East Fife 0; Queen Sth 0, Livingston 1; Inverness CT 2, Stenhousemuir 1.
Leading positions: 1, Livingston (32-55); 2, Clydebank (32-53); 3, Stranraer (32-52).

Third Division: Albion 1, Ross Co 3; Alloa 3, Dumbarton 0; Arbroath 1, Berwick 0; Cowdenbeath 0, Montrose 0; Queens Pk 0, E Stirling 2.
Leading positions: 1, Alloa (32-64); 2, Arbroath (31-60); 3, Ross County (32-55).